

IN THE TABLOID
**TALKING ABOUT
A GENERATION**

NEWS, PAGE 13
**MAY BALL
MADNESS**

Tories at war as polls close

Anthony Bevins
and Colin Brown

The Tories started warring even before the polling stations had closed last night, with leadership candidates jockeying for position to succeed John Major.

Clearly anticipating a Tory defeat, leading Euro-sceptics accused Kenneth Clarke, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, of sabotaging the Conservative election campaign by refusing to allow Mr Major to veto entry into the single European currency.

Across Whitehall, ministerial special advisers were packing

vager to appear over the weekend, with an implicit nudge-and-wink hint that he would be in the running for the succession.

Cabinet contenders had already been beaten to the starting gate by John Redwood, the one man unconstrained by the niceties of waiting for the result. He has already been booked to appear on BBC Radio 4's *The World at One* programme today, and he is scheduled to star on London Weekend Television's *Jonathan Dimbleby* programme on Sunday, to "discuss the lessons for the Conservative Party".

According to Labour sources, the biggest lesson of the campaign was the way in which the party's machine "ran Central Office ragged" at every turn, in spite of the fact that they had received a leaked copy of Labour's "war book" battle plans.

One senior Labour source said he suspected that the Tories had under-played their strongest card - the economy - because they were wary of promoting Kenneth Clarke, for fear of provoking a Euro-sceptic backlash.

The Tory pro-Europeans are ready to launch a fight-back today with Douglas Hurd, the former Foreign Secretary, poised to go the rounds of the broadcasting studios to issue a point-by-point answer to the charges from the Euro-sceptics.

"The Euro-sceptics are being complete idiots if they think Europe was the issue which cost us the election," said a senior Cabinet source. "There were over 200 candidates who fought the election on a commitment to rule out the single currency. It was made pretty clear to anyone wanting to cast their vote what the nature of the Tory party would be."

But Lord Tebbit, the former chairman of the party, was the first openly to put the boot into Mr Major for refusing to fight



Devotion to democracy: Sisters of the enclosed Benedictine order of Tyburn Convent, Marble Arch, London, queuing to exercise their democratic right yesterday morning. The nuns, who live in silent contemplation, are only permitted to leave the convent for visits to the doctor or dentist - or to exercise any 'civic duty'.

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election '97

in anticipation of being thrown out of their offices by a Labour victory. One official at the Treasury said: "We are spring cleaning over here."

With yesterday's voting marked by a high early turn-out throughout the country during a bright and sunny day, the recent spate of terrorist scares prompted the first appearance of armed police officers at Tony Blair's polling station in Sedgfield, County Durham.

But it was the early moves on the Tory leadership that provided the early indicator of the result. Even before polling opened, at least one Cabinet challenger for the leadership had told broadcasters he was

on a Euro-sceptic ticket by ruling out a single currency. "Labour would never have had a dog's chance if he had ruled out the single currency," he wrote in the *Sun*.

With strong Whitehall rumours circulating about Michael Portillo's putative leadership campaign, *Ladbroke's*

yesterday reported heavy betting on Mr Portillo and Mr Heseltine for the succession. They are joint 5-2 favourites.

But early contenders could yet be disappointed if Mr Major spurs the advice of close friends and decides that he has a duty to see his party through to a mature and considered

leadership battle in July, or even the autumn. Mr Major's friends argue that, having been betrayed by party feuding, he should leave the warring factions to do their worst, and announce his intention to stand down at the earliest opportunity.

Other, calmer voices say - rightly - that if he did that, he would be rewarding the very people who have made his life so difficult as Prime Minister for the past six years.

A precipitate resignation and leadership contest would probably leave the party in the hands of the right-wing Euro-sceptics and, possibly, trigger a mass defection by pro-Euro-

pean MPs. Delay would help to calm the excitement. It would give new MPs time to settle down, think about the future of the party, and mobilise support for a contender who could hold the party together. That could even revive the possibility of a joint Heseltine-Portillo ticket.

With brisk polling reported from around the country, Mr Major said after he had voted in his Huntingdon constituency that the 30-per-cent local turn-out was "way above what we'd normally expect." He said it was "a very good omen for democracy when you've got 'weather like this, on polling day and what looks like a high turn-out."

MPs? Philistines all, says Hockney

David Lister
and Andrew Marr

David Hockney, our best known living artist, last night warned that Britain does not need a government of "bossy prefects," and subtly suggested that Jack Straw should make legalising marijuana a priority.

"Many more of my friends have died from alcohol than drugs," said the 59-year-old artist looking unusually boyish in a knitted green waistcoat. But I bet Jack Straw will be serving drinks tonight. I would prefer a joint, really. What am I supposed to say?"

Hockney was speaking to *The Independent* at one of the most enjoyable occasions on election night. It was the opening of his first commercial exhibition in London for 15 years, and with the light flooding in through the glazed roof of the gallery onto his vibrant paintings

of flowers, he briefly forsook contemporaries such as Kilg, Lucien Freud, Sir Anthony Caro and Allen Jones, to tell us his personal manifesto for change.

He said he had only voted once in his life, for Harold Wilson, and an era that ushered in libertarianism, homosexual law reform and artistic innovation. He hoped, but did not expect, to see again a government encouraging such things. "I'm a bit dreading Jack Straw really," he told us. "He is about my age and 30 years ago they were saying well, you can't legalise marijuana, they don't know the facts. Thirty years have passed and now they do."

Hockney recently said: "Parliament are philistines: people who are not concerned with beauty, not concerned with the things I am." Last night he added: "There's so much energy and creativity about but it has to be supported. Yet on an of-

ficial level we're a philistine country." He mused for a moment then said: "Mind you it could be worse. Have you ever been to New Zealand?"

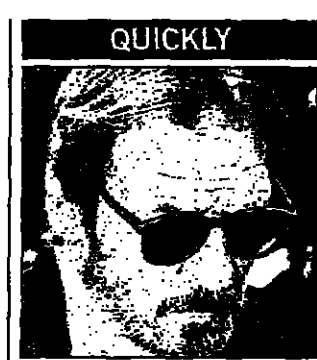
Hockney pleaded for the new government to consider to the appearance of public buildings. "Years and years ago, when they used to pull the buildings down in Bradford, I would say why don't they spend more money and make them more attractive?"

But he did express optimism in one area unrelated to politics. Painting is making a comeback, he said. "We've gone through the photography era - the young artist will move back to painting. It is happening."

David Hockney: "Flowers, Faces and Spaces" is at the Annely Juda Fine Art Gallery, London W1, until July. It contains his new paintings of flowers and portraits of himself and his family.



Flower power: David Hockney at the opening of his first commercial exhibition in London for 15 years. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz



Murderer deported
"Mad Dog" McCafferty (above), the multiple murderer who has been deported from Australia after spending a total of 23 years in jail, is due to arrive in Britain today. Page 16

£300,000 damages
Sandra Hurley, the mother of a Down's Syndrome child who was refused a screening test is to receive £300,000 damages following an out-of-court settlement of her negligence claim. Page 5

Refugees wait
United Nations agencies are struggling to clear a backlog of some 2,000 Rwandan refugees waiting to be airlifted home from Zaire. Page 16

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Maze prison protest set to end after crisis talks

The loyalist protest at the Maze prison is to end after a breakthrough during crisis meetings between loyalist politicians and Northern Ireland security officials yesterday.

After nearly an hour of talks at Stormont Castle, representatives from the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), which has close links to UDA paramilitaries at the centre of the protests, emerged to say there were signs the dispute could be resolved. Two earlier meetings had ended without agreement.

The dispute had started on Tuesday after prison officers introduced new security measures for all prisoners in the aftermath of the discovery of a Republican escape tunnel at the Maze. Loyalists refused to co-operate with the planned twice-daily lock-ups for head counts on the grounds they were being penalised for the behaviour of the IRA.

Prison staff were withdrawn from two of the H-shaped blocks involved, family visits were suspended and inmates took to the roofs, burning furniture and papers. The Ulster Freedom Fighters then warned of "a price to be paid" if riot squads were used to re-take the prison blocks.

Simon Reeve

Man charged over pub murder



A 27-year-old man was yesterday charged with murdering judge's daughter Rachel McGrath, who was stabbed to death as she called to collect her boyfriend from a public house last Friday. Jobless Nicholas Burton, 27, will appear before magistrates in Stockport, Greater Manchester, today.

Burton, of no fixed address, was remanded in custody yesterday charged with kidnapping 17-year-old college student Debbie van Gerko near her home in Gatley, Stockport, the day after 27-year-old Miss McGrath died.

Burton, who was arrested in North Wales on Sunday, is also accused of making death threats and false imprisonment in connection with the alleged kidnapping of Miss van Gerko.

Miss McGrath, of Winslow, Cheshire, whose father, Brian, 55, is a district judge, was found dead outside the Victoria Tavern in Bramhall, Stockport, after driving there to collect her live-in boyfriend, Kevin Forster, 25, after a night out.

Cabbies pledge help in rapist hunt

A cabbies' leader yesterday pledged "maximum co-operation" with police hunting a taxi driver who raped a 13-year-old girl. Bob Oddy, general secretary of the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association, which oversees the 17,000 cabs and 22,000 drivers operating in London, said the association was considering the possibility that a bogus driver could be involved, adding: "There are hundreds of second-hand taxi cabs in London and it is perfectly possible that the rapist could have got hold of one."

Mr Oddy's pledge came after police appealed for help in the hunt for the driver of a black cab who subjected a 13-year-old girl to a terrifying ordeal, raping her three times while she was on a sightseeing visit to London.

The victim, who comes from Southampton and is now 14, was attacked after being picked up by the black cab in The Strand at about midnight on Sunday, 23 March.

Chaos ahead for drivers in France

Lorry firms are braced for a week of massive disruption to travel in France because of a combination of official restrictions and another protest strike. The AA advised motorists planning a Bank Holiday cross-Channel break to be prepared for possible chaos on Monday, caused by a threatened new blockade.

May Day is a public holiday in France, and under rules introduced at the end of the last year - to appease striking French lorry drivers - no foreign lorries are allowed on the country's roads on Sundays and official holidays. In addition, two French truckers' unions have backed a "day of action" on Monday.

people



Rick Parfitt: Manager blames cigarettes and diet for heart condition (Photograph)

Rock 'n' roll lifestyle catches up with Status Quo star

Rick Parfitt, the guitarist with the veteran rock band Status Quo, was last night said to be "desperate to get back to work", less than 24 hours after undergoing an emergency quadruple heart bypass operation.

Parfitt, 48, from Teddington, south-west London, was recovering in the intensive care unit at London's Wellington Hospital after a four-hour operation.

A spokesman for the band said: "He is drifting in and out of consciousness but he has been talking to nurses. He's desperate to get back to work but surgeons say he will have to wait until 1 August."

The musician was admitted to hospital after complaining of chest pains. Extensive tests revealed a narrowing of arteries to his heart, and his surgeon recommended immediate surgery. He is expected to make a full recovery but will remain in intensive care until this evening.

His manager, David Walker, arrived at the hospital in St John's Wood yesterday afternoon. He said Parfitt had the first twinges of pain on Sunday, but it was not until Tuesday, after he had finished a day's recording that he contacted his Harley Street doctor.

"Rick woke up in a state of shock. He was all wired

up and drugged up but he still had a smile in his eyes," said Mr Walker. "He had shown he signs of heart problems during the extensive tour in which we covered between 40,000 and 50,000 miles. He had only complained about the usual things, such as tiredness."

"He went to his doctor, who had experienced similar symptoms and had the tenacity to recognise that Rick would need thorough tests."

"I was told on the phone that the tests would be a safety precaution, but then I got a message from his surgeon saying that unless he went under the knife immediately, it could be too late."

Mr Walker added: "We have no idea what caused this, after all he keeps fit. The show itself is a keep-fit show. I guess it was to do with smoking and a bad diet, though I tried to get him to use patches to get him off the cigarettes."

The operation has caused the immediate cancellation of all Status Quo concerts for May, June and July. The band was due to undertake a series of 21 European and festival appearances this summer, playing to more than 1 million fans.

Last year Parfitt crashed his Porsche and was banned from driving for 18 months.

briefing

EVOLUTION

Study of lizards proves Darwin was right

Scientists believe they have proved Charles Darwin was right by setting lizards on different evolutionary paths and watching the results. Darwin argued in *The Origin of the Species* that when organisms colonise a new territory they adapt to its conditions and eventually evolve into a new species.

The first observable evidence that this happens has come from an experiment in which Anolis lizards were introduced to a group of Bahamian islands. Returning to the islands 14 years later, the scientists, led by Dr Jonathan Losos from Washington University, Missouri, found that the island lizards had changed to suit the vegetation of their new environment.

They had developed much shorter hind limbs and become lighter to help them perch on the thinner branches and twigs found on the islands. They also had wider toe-pads than lizards living in their natural home on the island of Staniel Cay.

Science journal *Nature*, which published the results today, said: "This may be among the most important work in evolutionary studies since Darwin studied the diversity of finches on the Galapagos Islands during the voyage of the Beagle."

HEALTH

Irish ignoring dangers of sun

Sun-loving Irish people forget or ignore the long-term risks of skin cancer when they get the opportunity to go out and get a tan, a psychologist warned yesterday. Dr Anne-Marie McMahon said: "The trouble with the Irish is that we have sun-loving gregarious personalities, but sensitive Nordic skin. And our climate is so unpredictable we rush out with a sense of joy when we see the sun."

She was speaking after a survey showed that the number of Irish people who do not take any precautions to protect themselves from the risk of skin cancer when they go sunbathing had doubled from 11 per cent last year to 22 per cent this year.

Only 6 per cent of Irish sun-lovers limited the time they spend in the sun - a 16 per cent drop on the number of people who said they took precautions in the same survey last year.



CHURCH

A bleak view from the vicarage

Vicars' wives think their husbands are overworked and underpaid, according to a new survey. The study of more than 100 vicars' spouses revealed the modern-day pressures on male and female priests and their families.

It concluded that most vicars work an average of more than 60 hours a week, with 25 per cent of wives believing their family relationships suffered because of the clergy workload. In addition, many wives say although they can meet day-to-day needs but cannot afford extras such as holidays or new appliances.

The survey of more than 100 ecclesiastical spouses was carried out by Susan Avis, whose husband, Paul Avis who is sub Dean of Exeter Cathedral and vicar of Stoke Canon near Exeter, Devon.

Vicars are awarded an annual stipend of around £14,500, no matter how long they have served in the post. However, they do have the benefit of a free home and a non-contributory pension, which brings the package nearer to £20,000 a year.

Mrs Avis said: "The survey may have given clergy spouses the chance to let off steam."

"But equally noteworthy were respondents who nonetheless counted blessings and were endeavouring to accept their difficulties cheerfully as part of their calling to follow Christ."

The Archdeacon of Exeter, the Venerable Tony Tremlett, said: "People do not go into the Church because of the money. It is not an income which allows any luxury. The clergy is expected to be all things to all people. Clearly vicars cannot do everything."

TRANSPORT

Scotland offers life in the fast lane

If you want to avoid life in the slow lane and dodge daily traffic jams, then the Scottish Borders and East Anglia are the best places to live and work, new research published has revealed.

Around 70 per cent of British motorists spend up to 30 minutes stuck in a traffic jam during an average working day, but a drive to work in the Borders and East Anglia is much easier with 41 per cent and 40 per cent of motorists respectively avoiding a jam altogether.

That compares with only 3 per cent in Lancashire, 7 per cent in the central region of England and 8 per cent of drivers in Yorkshire who manage to dodge daily hold-ups.

And if you ever want to get stuck in the slow lane then the Midlands, which includes the M6 and Spaghetti Junction, is the place to head for.

Ninety per cent of motorists interviewed for the research, sponsored by breakdown service Antontional Rescue, are held up in traffic jams every day by anything up to two hours - although for most, the average daily hold-up is no more than 15 minutes.

SOCIETY

King of the squeegee rides again

The world window-cleaning record was reclaimed by its former holder, Terry Burrows, yesterday. He cut nearly a quarter of a second from his previous best as he cleaned three 45-inch-square windows in 18.46 seconds at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham.

Mr Burrows, 41, from South Oxendon, Essex, used a bucket of soapy water, a 14-inch applicator and a 12in squeegee blade.

Rules stipulate that the judge may add half-second penalties if any sections of the three panes are not wetted first or remain wet at the finish. The window ledge also has to be wiped clean.

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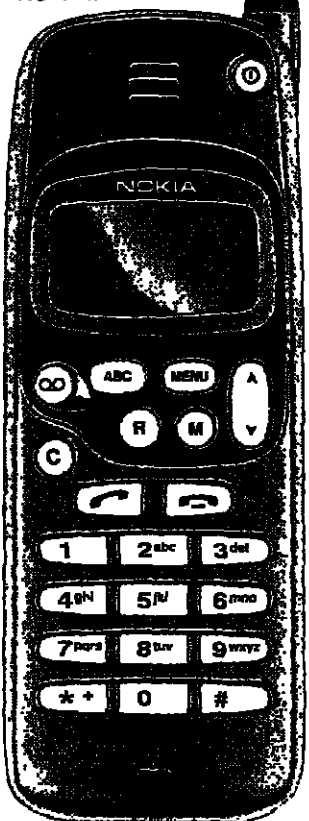
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Dame Shirley's
£31m fight moves
to High Court

The decision to impose a £31.6m surcharge on Dame Shirley Porter and five former colleagues in the Westminster City Council "homes for votes" affair will reach the High Court in October.

The former Tory council leader, who has indicated she wishes to submit fresh evidence, was one of those directed yesterday to be available for cross examination at a six-week appeal to begin on 2 October. Her QC asked the three senior judges in the case to disregard the "horrible" publicity surrounding it.

Three Westminster councillors and three officials, including Dame Shirley, who now lives in Israel, were accused by the district auditor, John Magill, of "wilful misconduct" and "disgraceful and improper gerrymandering" between 1987 and 1989.

In May last year he made them jointly and severally liable to repay the £31.6m estimated to have been spent by the council moving council tenants from marginal wards and selling their homes cheaply to people who were more likely to vote Conservative, in an effort to fix election results.

Lawyers for Dame Shirley and her former colleagues will argue in court that the auditor's methods of procedure and conclusions were fundamentally flawed and the record surcharge was unfair.

Lord Justice Rose, sitting with Mr Justice Latham and Mr Justice Keene, laid



down a timetable for the hearing and gave directions on the extent to which fresh evidence would be admissible before them.

Lord Justice Rose said it would be for the appellants to open the case and seek to establish that there was "something amiss" with the auditor's decision. If they overcame that hurdle, it would be for the auditor to prove they were guilty of wilful misconduct.

Other appellants are: former deputy leader David Weeks; former housing chairman Peter Hartley; former managing director Bill Phillips; and Graham England, former director of housing. Mr England's former assistant Paul Hayler, who has undergone treatment for depression, has had his appeal stayed until further order. The surcharge is suspended pending the High Court challenge.

Peter Pan and the princess

Sir James "Jim" Barrie, author of Peter Pan, was revealed yesterday to have undertaken an unusual royal collaboration.

When Princess Margaret unveiled a plaque commemorating the 85th anniversary of Peter Pan's statue in Kensington Gardens, she recalled how she was befriended, at the age of three, by the celebrated writer.

Sir James was so impressed with the young princess that he used her words in a play and paid her 14 newly minted pence by way of royalties.

Princess Margaret explained how Sir James sat next to her at her third birthday party and later wrote a description of their meeting for Cynthia Asquith's book *The King's Daughters*.

He said: "Some of her presents were on the table, simple things that might have come from the shoppey shops, but she was in a frenzy of glee over them, especially about one to which she had given the place of honour by her plate."

"I said to her as one astounded, 'Is that

really your very own?' and she said how I envied her and immediately placed it between us with the words 'It is yours and mine'."

Soon after the party, the princess heard someone speak of him, and remarked: "I know that man. He is my greatest friend, and I am his greatest friend."

Barrie incorporated the phrases in his last play, *The Boy David*, and when he next met the Princess, agreed that, as a collaborator in the production, she would receive a penny for each performance.

The play closed after a short run and Sir James assumed Margaret had forgotten his promise. However, in 1937, her father, George VI, wrote Barrie a playful reminder that, if he did not pay up, he would hear from the royal solicitors.

So the writer drew up a formal agreement to pay, which still exists in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. It was the last thing Barrie wrote. He died on 19 June, 1937.

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My brief encounters of a lasting kind on road to the House

Yvette Cooper, Independent journalist and prospective MP, describes her baptism of fire in pursuit of a seat

"This lady wants your mum and dad to vote for her". The words are clearly and brightly pronounced. "She's going to be the headmaster checks himself. "She wants to be our MP. Does any one know what MP stands for? Member of Par..." Three or four high-pitched voices finish the word for him: "Parliament." "What do Members of Parliament do?" continues the headmaster. A child at the front pipes up: "They help people."

"That's right," responds the head, while I reel from the direct hit. Cynicism, disillusion and hostility: all these I am braced for, but a burst of straightforward trust knocks me between the eyes. Recovering composure, I try a question myself: "Can anyone name the political parties?"

Eight hands pump up into the air, shoulders and bodies straining to catch up with them. Perhaps the question was too easy. "Labour," beams the first child I nod at, and the other seven hands descend. There is a puzzled pause. "Any other parties?" prompts the class teacher from the corner. Apparently not - not as far as these 32 Pontefract six-year-olds are concerned, anyway. Even after another pause, and a lot more encouragement, the best they can do is one tentative suggestion from a girl at the back: "New Labour, Miss?" I suppress a grin, and we move on to the next classroom.

Here in Pontefract and Castleford, the constituency that selected me as its Labour candidate just over three weeks ago, Conservative voters don't crop up much on the campaign trail. Our job here is not to persuade wavering, but to get the Labour vote out. My task, as a new face, is that I am

working hard and here to stay. Leaflets and posters have been printed and parcelled for sending out to voters and supporters. Days are parcelled up and distributed too. I handed out activists and councillors in every corner of the constituency a package of time to fill for me with local visits and events.

On day one I visited two factories, a technical college, a day centre for the elderly and a line-dancing class. Day two took me through four schools, three pensioners' groups, a working-men's club and a barber's. I have kicked off for Castleford Rugby League and called the first line of bingo at the huge Gala Bingo Hall.

At every stage I am accompanied by dark suits - predominantly burly men, be they councillors, local union activists, or party organisers. Jacked and rosetted, they are lethal with a roll of stickers. The protective warmth and enthusiasm with which they watch out for my welfare is astonishing - especially given that we met less than a month ago.

But then meeting strangers is all I have done for weeks now. I assume it gets easier with practice: pressing the flesh. The challenge is the first few lines of conversation. Waffle, and people smell it. Dissemble, and they sense it. There is nowhere to hide, no unwritten rule of politeness to defend you from the judgement of a fellow citizen.

Nor is there any way to stick to soft and soppy tasks like kissing babies. Campaigning for votes means entering, however briefly, the lives of the people you seek to represent. Some of those lives aren't easy. At the first infants' school I visited, the head teacher told me the first task

for the caretaker each morning was to sweep the used needles from the playground. Over half the children arriving in the nursery class have speech problems, because - a party member suggested - no one at home has been talking to them properly.

It could have been a dismal encounter, listening to tales of abuse, drugs and woe. But the head teacher and the governors were brimming with determination and optimism about what they could achieve, not least through the parenting classes and literacy classes they were pursuing for local mums and dads.

Leaping swiftly forward through the lifecycle, we pass junior schools and comprehensives. Somewhere along the way, I remember to eat, but not often and not much. Bridget Jones would be proud of me: Cigarettes: none (apart from a bit of passive smoking at the working-men's club.) Alcohol: 4 units.

Calories: not enough. Hands shaken: 70, v good.

Next stop, the world of work: pits as miners finish their shift, a clothing factory where rows of women stitch and snip, several chemical factories, and a dark and clanking glass factory. At the pensioners' day centre where we stop for tea, one

politician is the same; none of them have done anything about that bit of wasteland round the back of the home; who do I think I am, coming in from outside; why won't anyone raise her pension; and on and on. It is a delicate situation to handle. Weakened under her hostility and the crowd will all sense it and crow.

A burst of straightforward trust knocks me between the eyes

Woman is determined to draw blood. She is seething even before I open my mouth. Lips pursed, arms tightly folded, eyes flickering up to the ceiling, she looks like a teenager who is being told off by a teacher.

And she is furious with me or with herself, or with something. Whatever I say she spits back a comment. All

Fight back and they will close ranks and lynch me. Ride it, ever reasonable, and sooner or later the pack turns on their own. By the time we left, Mrs Pursed-Lips had been roundly trounced by everyone in the room and the candidate pronounced a lovely lass. One elderly woman explains, as we leave, how her moth-

er insisted on being carried to the polling station as she was dying. "She never missed a vote. Nothing would stop her. That's how we were taught. Our family fought, you know - for the miners, for the Labour Party. I'll never vote anything else."

This deeply religious attitude to voting is a severe contrast to the glazed eyes of younger voters. One of the final campaign stops is at a youth club in the south of the constituency, where they are holding a mock election. Try as I might, I cannot tempt any of the teenagers into talking to me about politics. So we stick to who-fancies-who. The 14-year old Labour candidate is a bit of a heart-throb, it seems, so that presumably explains his support. But the Socialist Labour candidate has done better, targeting the 11-year-old boys on bikes who are swiftly bribed into sabotaging the other candidates' posters. Be it the teenagers'

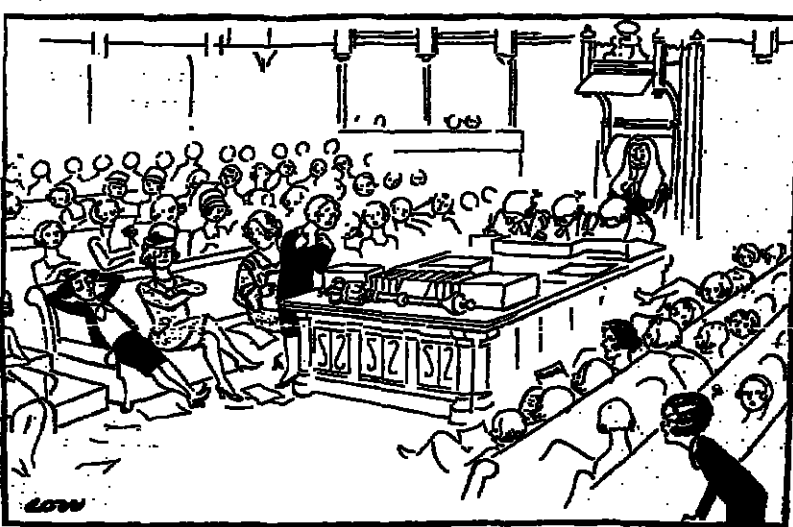
love-life, or the pensioners' operation, I am amazed at people's willingness to tell politicians their life stories at the touch of a knuckle. And then, on the eve of polling day I am reminded why they do it. A woman we have met briefly in the pub on the way home tells about her severely disabled son, who has become too heavy for her to carry upstairs to the bathroom. But she can't get the help she needs to adapt her house.

Is there anything, she asks, that I can do? Real-world responsibility drenches me suddenly like a cold shower. I promise to do whatever I can to help, without any idea how much difference an MP can make in a case like this. Labour's policy handbook provides no clues on the matter. This, poking up between the stickers and the handshakes, is the important stuff: as the Pontefract six-year-old told me at the beginning, "helping people".



Hopeful: Yvette Cooper, Labour candidate for Pontefract and Castleford, meets the people in Castleford town centre

Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra



Sister act: Two of the works on show at the Fawcett Society exhibition, which spans 130 years of campaigning for equal rights for women

Drawn to the truth: Cartoons chart women's battle for equality

Louise Jury

The cartoon dates from 1928. "The Parliament of the future", it says, under a picture of an all-female House. If only, the sisters of the Nineties might reply.

The image is one of 145 in an exhibition drawn together by the Fawcett Society, the equality campaigners, spanning 130 years, which opens today. The aim of Fawcett's *Funny Girls - Cartooning for Equality* was to show through the cartoons women's battle for equal rights. But when they came up with the idea, the society had no idea whether that would be feasible.

Diane Atkinson, a historian and the show's curator, sifted 5,000 images, from Low, Giles and Mel Calman to Posh Simmonds, to discover it was. Fortunately, though the point of some old jokes was lost in time, others still carried a message. "I think they are quite a good barometer of the issues," Dr Atkinson said. "And I believe I've managed to cover quite a long time span quite economically through these images."

What can be seen is the rise of the Suffragette movement, the changes in attitude after the awarding of the vote to women and the subsequent struggle for equal rights. The subjects are not only politics at Westminster but, in a broader sense, in the workplace and home. A *Punch* cartoon in 1853 was one of the



"Constable, would you mind removing that suffragette from the railings?"

Women on top: Heath, defeated by Thatcher, depicted as a chained Suffragette

earliest to feature a woman MP. It was, Dr Atkinson said, "a bizarre, almost surrealistic image to the mid-Victorians". Then humour turned full circle from the thoughts of women in Parliament as a joke in itself to the moment when a woman

finally came out on top. When Margaret Thatcher beat Edward Heath to lead the Tories, the occasion was marked with a cartoon showing her pointing to Sir Edward chained to the Westminster railings in the manner of a Suffragette. His

banners read "Keep Women Out Of The Top Spot" and "A Woman's Place Is In The Home". Some things never change. Attacks on the appearance of women politicians are shown to have a historical precedent in a

cartoon depicting all Suffragettes as so ugly they have never been kissed. "It's one of those clichés they recycle all the time - you must be a sad lesbian with a moustache," Dr Atkinson said. Despite the sexism, she said, the exhibition and accompanying book were not anti-male, nor angry and strident. "I'm not a woman who hates men - I am married to one," Shelagh Diplock, director of the Fawcett Society, said the cartoons reflected how far women have come and how much was still to be won.

But they also showed feminists had a sense of humour. "I wanted to show that we don't take ourselves seriously all the time. The battles of the sexes is often presented as earnest and hostile. But I'm a great believer in using humour to get people to re-think their ideas."

The date for launching the exhibition, at The Pump House People's History Museum, Manchester, was chosen 18 months ago but could not have been more appropriate. The exhibition goes to Glasgow in July and to London in October. Mrs Diplock said: "I hope everyone will laugh but come away thinking 'This has been a long hard struggle, and where are we now? Yes, things have changed, but how much?' Then, having thought about it, they'll come and join the Fawcett. Or stand for Parliament."

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news

Snowdrop withers but battle to curb guns lives on

Mark Rowe

The Snowdrop Campaign, which started life on an antiquated decorator's trestle table in the numb days that followed the Dunblane massacre, and acted as a potent voice for the anti-gun lobby led by the victims' parents, was finally wound up as the nation went to the polls yesterday.

Launched within weeks of the day - 13 March, 1996 - when Thomas Hamilton shot dead 16 primary school children and their teacher, the campaign took its name from the only spring flower in bloom when the tragedy took place. Its message captured the public mood of disquiet at existing firearms legislation. Later, its co-ordinator,

Ann Pearston, described it as one of the most successful single-issue campaigns ever seen in the UK.

The founders, who organised a petition of more than 750,000 signatures, now plan to give their support to the London-based pressure group, the Gun Control Network, which was set up after the Hungerford massacre in 1987.

Mrs Pearston said recently: "We feel we have done all we can and now it's time to call it a day. A lot of people picked up a pen and signed our petition, now we'd like them to pick up a pen and join the Gun Control Network to continue the fight."

Snowdrop was started from behind an old decorator's table in Stirling, when Mrs Pearston,

Jacqueline Walsh and Rosemary Hunter invited people to sign a petition calling for a ban on the private ownership of handguns.

Mrs Pearston, who did not suffer any personal tragedy at Dunblane, got involved because she had lived for 18 months in the city.

Another person involved in the campaign was Dr Mick North, The university lecturer

lost his five-year-old daughter Sophie, his only child, in the tragedy. His wife, Barbara, had died of cancer when Sophie was just three.

Dr North, 49, was the first bereaved parent to speak out just nine days after his daughter's murder.

Lord Cullen's public inquiry was the first major hurdle facing the families at the end of May 1996. They made their first

public call for a total handgun ban at the end of the inquiry. It coincided with the Snowdrop Petition, with more than 700,000 signatures, being handed in.

The findings of the Cullen inquiry last October failed to recommend a total ban on handguns but the Government went further when they banned all private handguns, but only above .22 calibre. After a complete ban was rejected by the Commons, Tony Blair promised that a Labour government would legislate for a total ban on handguns, with a free vote for MPs.

One of the last acts of the Snowdrop campaign was to screen an advert at cinemas across Britain. The 40-second film, which showed a human-shaped target being blown apart by pistol shots, involved a voice-

over by 007 legend Sean Connery.

The Snowdrop campaign also launched an anti-handgun poster last month featuring a blackboard with "ban all handguns" written in chalk in a child's handwriting.

The decision to wind up the Snowdrop campaign follows divisions within the campaign over how long it should continue as a pressure group.

Time to stop: In the wake of the Dunblane massacre, 80 per cent of handguns have been banned. Now, the campaign has served its purpose, says Ann Pearston, a founder. Photograph: SDR

Countdown to ban

13 March 1996: Thomas Hamilton kills 16 children and their teacher before turning gun on himself.

17 March 1996: Mothering Sunday. Parents call for ban on private ownership of handguns. By end-month, Snowdrop petition gathers national momentum.

28 May 1996: Lord Cullen's inquiry begins.

July 3 1996: Dunblane families hand in 750,000 signature petition calling for handgun ban.

October 1996: Lord Cullen's report presented to parliament.

November 1996: Government defeats attempts to outlaw all handguns, including .22 calibre pistols, in vote on Firearms (Amendment) Bill.

December 1996: Dunblane children singing 'Knockin' on Heaven's Door' goes to No.1 in the pop charts.

27 February 1997: Handgun ban becomes law. Covers all handguns above .22; requires destruction of 160,000 of 200,000 legal handguns.

1 May 1997: Snowdrop campaign wound up; hands over lobbying for total ban to Gun Control Network.

DAILY POEM

Book Ends (I)

By Tony Harrison

Baked the day she suddenly dropped dead
we chew it slowly that last apple pie.

Shocked into sleeplessness you're scared of bed.
We never could talk much, and now don't try.
You're like book ends, the pair of you, she'd say,
Hog that grate, say nothing, sit, sleep, stare...

The "scholar" me, you, worn out on poor pay,
only our silence made us seem a pair.

Not as good for staring in, blue gas,
too regular each bud, each yellow spike.

A night you need my company to pass
and she not here to tell us we're alike!

Your life's all shattered into smithereens.

Back in our silences and sullen looks,
for all the Scotch we drink, what's still between's
not the thirty or so years, but books, books, books.

Tony Harrison will be reading "Book Ends" just before 2200 today on Radio 3. All the poems that have appeared this week come from his Selected Poems (Penguin, £6.99). ©Tony Harrison

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Down's mother wins £300,000 in damages

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

The mother of a Down's Syndrome child who was refused a screening test is to receive £300,000 damages after the Ministry of Defence, the department responsible for the hospital, agreed to an out-of-court settlement of her negligence claim.

Sandra Hurley, who is now 42, had told Mr Justice Hooper that if she had she known of her son Matthew's condition, she would have terminated the pregnancy. Mrs Hurley, who was 35 at the time of the pregnancy, claimed that a doctor at Louis Margaret Maternity Hospital, Aldershot, Hampshire, was negligent in telling her that the chances of having a Down's Syndrome baby were no greater than if she had been 26.

The damages will help Mrs Hurley provide a good quality of life for Matthew, who was born in June, and her two other children. She will also receive her legal costs. Experts said the size of the settlement, without admission of liability on the fourth day of the trial, indicated that her legal team were confident of winning while the defendants expected to lose. The case is bound to be carefully studied by health providers.

Mrs Hurley, from Aldershot, said Matthew was in good health and was doing well at school. "I can't tell you how pleased I am. If I'd had the test, I wouldn't have gone through with the pregnancy. But now he's here, I love him with all my heart and wouldn't be without him."

She had gone with her husband to her



Sandra Hurley: Claims she was misled over chance of having Down's baby

“If the test had come back positive, I would have had a termination in days”

GP to ask for an amniocentesis test. When she went to the hospital, she said, she was advised of the 1-per-cent risk of the test causing the abortion of a healthy foetus and told that the hospital did not offer it to women of 35 because of the cost.

Her counsel, Richard Davies QC, told the court that the information was “clearly substandard” because statistics showed that a 35-year-old woman had up to a three-and-a-half times greater risk of giving birth to a Down's Syndrome child than a woman aged 26.

Mrs Hurley said: “If I had had the test and it had come back positive I would have had a termination within days. There is no doubt about that. But he refused to give me the test and I was prepared to take the risk that it would cause me to miscarry.”

The hospital doctor, Lawrence Roberts, who left the army with the rank of Lt Col, told the court he would never have told Mrs Hurley that her risks of having a Down's Syndrome child were the same as that of a woman of 26. But he would have said during the “routine consultation” that the dangers were not “automatically higher in absolute terms than if she was 26”. The risks of Down's Syndrome were still not “very high” in a woman of 25, he said. Mrs Hurley's GP, Dr Anthony Raw, said he believed 35 was the beginning of serious risk of giving birth to a Down's Syndrome child.

A woman who developed Aids after receiving a contaminated blood transfusion has received “substantial” damages from the Irish state. The unidentified married woman, a nurse from Co Kilkenny, started legal action against the Irish Blood Transfusion Service and the Department of Health. She was the first person in Ireland to be infected by a transfusion. The settlement was made without going to court. Legal observers reckoned the figure could have amounted to around £250,000.

Parents to see details of test results

Judith Judd
Education Editor

New scores for national tests for 11-year-olds will be introduced this year because the present marking system does not give parents enough information.

As well as being told what level their children have reached, parents will be able to ask for scores which show how they have performed in reading, spelling, maths and mental arithmetic compared with others born in the same month.

Tests for 600,000 14-year-olds begin next Tuesday and for 600,000 11-year-olds the following Monday. Seven-year-olds are also being tested this term. At present most pupils at each age are awarded one of three levels.

Officials at the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, which advises the Government on testing, said yesterday that schools would not be required by law to give parents the new age-standardised scores but they hoped that most would decide to do so if parents requested them.

Schools are required to tell parents the level reached by their children. Seven-year-olds are expected to reach Level 2, 11-year-olds Level 4 and 14-year-olds between Levels 5 and 6. The new scores will range

“The criticism has been that Level 4 is too broad-brush”

from 70-130.

Nick Tate, the authority's chief executive, said: “The criticism has been that Level 4 has been too broad-brush and that to be told your child is on Level 4 along with practically every other child in the school is not giving the degree of discrimination parents want.”

“The age-standardised score is a more accurate reflection of how well a child is doing in relation to other children.”

A pilot last year in which seven-year-olds were given age-standardised reading scores in reading, spelling and maths had been well received, he said. However, Dr Tate said levels were a good way of measuring the comparative performance schools.

This year new grammar, spelling and punctuation tests are being piloted for 14-year-olds and new mental arithmetic tests are being tried out for 11- and 14-year-olds.

Around 3 per cent of schools which volunteered for the grammar tests have withdrawn after seeing sample tests, either because they disapprove of the questions or feel their pupils are not ready for them.



Vocal point: Anne-Marie Owens rehearsing her role as Venus in a new Opera North production of Wagner's Tannhäuser which opens tomorrow at the Grand Theatre, Leeds. The production is by Paul Daniel, who bids farewell as music director of Opera North to take up the same position at English National Opera in London. Photograph: Laurie Lewis

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End of the road: After weeks of relentless campaigning, the party leaders can only put down their political arms, sit back and wait

Security fears cast cloud on Labour's poll idyll

Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

The police and security services will be on high alert today amid fears that the IRA may choose the first day of the new government to continue its campaign of disruption.

Polling passed off peacefully yesterday following an unprecedented package of security measures, including the use of armed police officers at the Labour leader's home seat of Sedgefield, where police took the highly unusual step of using officers armed with Heckler and Koch automatic weapons, and wearing bullet-proof vests, to patrol the village and polling station at Trimdon, Co Durham.

A police spokesman said a small number of armed officers had been used in the Durham force's area for several weeks as part of the heightened security alert, and that the officers used yesterday were for Tony Blair's protection, rather than for voters going to the polls.

It made for an incongruous scene. Mr Blair in shirt-sleeves, his wife, Cherie, and their children, Euan, 13, Nicholas, 11, and Kathryn, 9, looked relaxed under clear blue skies as they strolled to the tiny, flower-bedecked polling station at Trimdon Colliery Community Centre, shadowed by the armed

police officers. Outside the Blair's home - a large Victorian house situated half-way down a tiny dirt track - two officers, again in bulletproof vests and cradling automatic weapons, stood guard all day.

"We never discuss the specifics of security, but, along with other forces, we increased our anti-terrorism measures in the run-up to Christmas," said George Oliver, spokesman for Durham Constabulary. "There has been an increase in the public appearance of armed officers over the past few weeks along certain routes."

"Naturally, security for the principals in the election has to be taken seriously and it has been heightened in recent weeks because of the [terrorist] problems that have happened across the country."

Extra police officers were on duty at many of the country's 45,000 polling stations, and covert surveillance operations were carried out, along with bomb searches at the counting centres.

But anti-terrorist officers believe that today is a more likely target. The IRA may be tempted to seize the new government's attention by staging a series of bomb threats in the first hours of power. Any motorway, railway and airport closures will have added impact



Armed escort: The Blair family leaving the well-guarded polling station in Sedgefield after voting

Photograph: David Rose

as all route-ways are expected to be clogged with people travelling for the Bank Holiday weekend.

There is also a precedent for a post-election hit. The night after John Major's victory in the 1992 general election, terrorists carried out two "spectacular" with massive bomb blasts in the City of London and at Staples Corner at the southern end of the M1.

In the Baltic Exchange attack the IRA detonated a massive car bomb in the heart of the City, killing three people and injuring 91. The bomb at Staples Corner injured no one but caused extensive damage.

A spokesman for the West Midlands police, who have had to cope with several of the recent coded telephone warnings, said: "The pattern suggests

that Friday is a more likely target than polling day.

"A Bank Holiday weekend on the first day of a new government is a choice target. With this in mind we are a number of

their ability to bring mayhem to motorways, the railways and air services with coded telephone calls, some warning of genuine devices, some merely hoaxes.

Officers in the constituencies of England and Wales unprecedented advice on how to minimise disruption in the event of bomb threats.

Similar advice went to officials in the Scottish and Ulster constituencies.

The party leaders and other prominent politicians were all closely shadowed yesterday by armed, plain-clothes officers.

In one of the few incidents yesterday to involve the police, a 19-year-old man was arrested at a polling station in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, on suspicion of impersonating another voter.

Back in Trimdon, the Labour leader kept his promise not to take anything for granted, even on the day of the polls, and visited several parts of his constituency to give support to

party workers and to drum up a few extra votes.

At Trimdon Labour Club, where he was due to make his first speech as Prime Minister, there were scenes of excited anticipation. A bank of 16 television sets was set up to allow 400 members and guests to watch the results roll in. Federation, a Gateshead brewery, had arranged an election special to help the party along - beer at 79p a pint - and the John Wrightson rock 'n' roll band had been booked for the night.

"There'll be a few bottles of champagne drunk tonight," said Colin Thompson, the band's guitarist. "I'll try and get Tony up to play - but then, I've been trying to get him up since 1983 without success."

"I think you could say he's nurturing his talent."

A Bank Holiday weekend on the first day of a new government is a choice [terrorist] target

security operations going on." A vast number of both covert and overt security operations were used yesterday to try and ensure that nothing prevented people going to the polls.

The IRA has demonstrated repeatedly in recent weeks

Polling stations were scoured for explosive devices ahead of opening at 7am, additional police officers were on guard and voters faced the prospect of being searched.

Last Friday, the Home Office sent the acting returning of-

Proud time for five who found Blair his seat

Steve Boggan

Amid the wild scenes of jubilation at Trimdon Labour Club last night, five men had particular cause to celebrate - the men responsible for creating Tony Blair the MP.

Theirs is a strange story that began over beer and football one evening in 1983. Mr Blair was desperate to be selected as a candidate and had resorted

to travelling round Britain begging for nominations.

The last constituency in the country to nominate a candidate was Sedgefield, so, armed with a list of Labour north secretaries, he travelled north and began knocking on doors. Eventually, John Burton, the secretary of Trimdon branch, agreed to see him.

"We were sitting there, at 9 Front Street South, drinking

beer and watching football when John said to us: 'There's a young lad coming to see us tonight. Wants us to nominate him,'" recalled Peter Brookes, 41, one of the five men present.

"I remember thinking, 'I just hope he doesn't ruin the football.' He came in, we gave him a beer and told him we'd talk to him after the game. He told us since that he had sat in his car outside, wondering what he

was doing in this mining village knocking on some stranger's door, and he very nearly turned around and went home."

But Mr Blair stayed and impressed the men so much that they decided to nominate him and worked tirelessly for the young stranger to be short-listed, a feat they achieved by 42 votes to 41.

The five - Mr Burton, who is now Mr Blair's agent, Mr

Brookes, Paul Trippett, Terry Ward and Simon Hoban - have since passed into the Labour Party's folklore.

In the days after the meeting, Mr Burton put Mr Blair up in his house, Mr Brookes lent him a car and Mr Trippett took time off work to drum up support for his nomination.

Only Mr Hoban was unable to attend last night's celebration but his place was taken by Phil

Wilson, who joined the campaign later.

"A lot of people think new Labour is some kind of concept dreamt up in Islington," said Mr Brookes. "Well it isn't. It was conceived here. It represents the same values as the people of Trimdon have - they are traditional Labour voters but they desperately wanted to see change. Tony got many of his ideas from talking to the

people here. He has cut through all the dogma and simply found out what people want. That is why he has been able to say that not everything Margaret Thatcher did was bad, but he wants to put right what was bad."

"That night, when he came in, we knew we had met someone special. We were right and he deserves the chance to show the country what he can do."

The job done, Major heads home to wait

Kathy Marks

Back in the bosom of his constituency yesterday after six gruelling weeks on the campaign trail, John Major spent possibly his last day as Prime Minister visiting the party faithful in Huntingdon, the place where he began his journey to Downing Street.

On a whirlwind tour of his home territory, he exuded confidence and good humour. Perhaps he was relieved that it was all over but the voting, or perhaps he was contemplating the virtues of a quieter life. Certainly, he looked nothing like a man facing a rendezvous with defeat.

Mr Major had woken up to find the fields opposite his home bathed in sunshine. Posters bearing his name bopped in the hedges.

The weather was "a good omen for democracy," he said later, adding there were signs

of an exceptionally high local turnout.

After casting his vote at the village hall in Great Stukeley, about half a mile from his house, he pronounced himself "entirely relaxed" as he posed for photographs with his wife, Norma, and Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare, who had earlier joined them for breakfast.

"We've had the political debate during the campaign, now it's up to people to make up their minds," he said.

"I think everyone has done their best to get the message across. There's a lot at stake, there's a lot at risk."

By mid-morning, Mr Major was willing in the heat. Visiting the home of his constituency chairwoman, Sophie Clegg, to thank party workers for their efforts, he discarded his suit jacket with visible relief.

On this most testing of days, the Prime Minister did not need to trouble himself at least with



Sundowners: John Major with 102-year-old Matilda Barlow

Photograph: Tom Pilston

the outcome in his own seat. At the previous election he had the largest Conservative majority in the country, 36,230. This is a constituency of picturesque villages which could easily have inspired Mr Major's nostalgic vision of a Middle England of warm beer and cricket pitches.

On a brief stopover in Wyton, there were small children to pose with; in Hemingford Abbots, a 102-year-old

woman complete with blue suit who had voted at every election since 1928 - Tory every time, naturally.

After the clashes with Labour activists in Stevenage the previous day, Huntingdon was a dream for Mr Major's minders. "This is how a walkabout should be - dead easy," one of them muttered as adoring supporters crowded round to wish Mr Major luck.

Lord Archer hung about in the background looking disconsolate. Asked about the prospects of a Conservative victory, he replied: "We pray, but I refuse to get optimistic."

Mr Major was planning to spend the afternoon at home. All that remained was to wait for the votes to be cast and counted, and to hope that the pollsters could yet be confounded.

Patten 'in line for Tatton seat'

Jojo Moyes

Tory activists in Tatton tried to secure waverers' votes by promising that Neil Hamilton would be replaced by the former Tory chairman Chris Patten. The Independent has learned.

One local resident said she been told by Tory canvassers that whatever her personal feelings about Mr Hamilton, the former minister at the centre of sleaze allegations, she should vote for him "this time round" as he would be out after the Downey report.

Then, instead of Martin Bell and the "Hampstead Mafia", Tatton Conservatives would have a new Tory MP in the form of Mr Patten, who will give up the governorship of Hong Kong in June.

Another Tatton Conservative Association source told The Independent that it was "fairly common knowledge". Mr Hamilton's Conservative supporters, he said, were "absolutely desperate. They'll say anything that's legal to get him re-elected."

He added: "It's been moot-

ed about Chris Patten for a long time, since Mr Hamilton's adoption meeting. But to be perfectly honest it's absolute rubbish."

He even speculated that the promise was being made with Mr Hamilton's approval.

"I'll believe he'll stop at nothing to get elected. If that means that his people are saying 'don't worry, because if Neil's found guilty of any wrongdoing he'll resign', I'm sure that he sanctioned it. I don't think he thinks there's anything wrong with that."

Mr Hamilton's supporters, he said, are making the promise on the basis of a letter he sent to two prominent local Conservatives assuring him that if he was found guilty of bribery and corruption, or if he permanently lost the whip, he would resign.

But the source said many Conservatives felt Mr Hamilton had sidestepped the question. "What we actually asked him for is that if he was found guilty of wrongdoing, dishonesty or criticised, he would resign and obviously he's not prepared to do that."

Ashdown charm fails to win Jack Russell's vote

Barrie Clement

Paddy Ashdown's leisurely polling day was disrupted by a small female Jack Russell who seemed to be less than impressed by the Liberal Democrat leader.

When Mr Ashdown sought to work his electoral magic on the little mite as he arrived at the polling station in Norton sub Hamdon, in Somerset, the four-year-old bitch lunged at him. Mr Ashdown's own dog, Lukas, proved unable to protect his master.

The aggressive terrier was in the arms of a villager, Prue Bidle, who said her pet was not dangerous and usually growled at people. Mr Ashdown's aides were at pains to point out, that contrary to some reports, the Liberal Democrat leader was not bitten by the animal.

The polling station was at the Westland helicopter social club just a few hundred yards away from Mr Ashdown's home, a small, biscuit-coloured terraced cottage where he lives with his wife, Jane.

The couple yesterday cast a proxy vote for their 31-year-old daughter who lives in France and who two weeks ago produced their first grandchild, called Mathias.

Mr Ashdown's daughter sent him a polling-day fax from France saying that yesterday the French were celebrating St Jeremy's Day. Mr Ashdown pointed out that his real name was Jeremy; he was given the name Paddy by contemporaries at his fee-paying school because of his Irish accent. His father farmed in Ulster.

On the ballot form in his Yeovil constituency, the Liberal Democrat leader was styled "John Jeremy Durham Ashdown (commonly known as Paddy)".

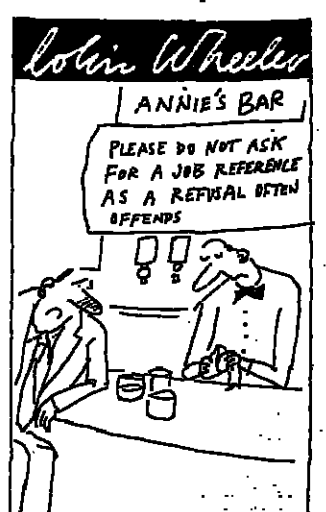
Having left the polling booth, Mr Ashdown was asked which candidate he had opted for. He said: "I never tell people which way I have voted."

Mr Ashdown, who has a national 14.8 per cent majority over his nearest - Tory - rival, spent most of yesterday touring polling booths in Yeovil, Chard and Ilminster in blazing sunshine. He has declared his confidence that his party has secured a historic breakthrough, especially in the West Country.

After addressing politics students at a sixth-form college in Taunton and eating a private dinner with family and friends, he watched the exit polls on television before making his way to the count.

The result was expected at around 2am this morning and then the Liberal Democrat leader was scheduled to be driven back to London to the party headquarters by officers of the Special Branch at 3am. Last night, the Ashdowns' local pub served free election-night cocktails called Jane, Norma and Cherie, after the wives of the three main party leaders.

Ms Ashdown said that she did not know what went into the cocktails, only that the beverage named after her was a bright Liberal Democrat yellow.



Labour moves HQ from Walworth Road to Millbank

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Tony Blair is to cut the final link with Labour's past by moving his party headquarters from Walworth Road in south London to its riverside media centre next to the Tate Gallery.

The move to Millbank Tower will have a strong symbolism for left-wingers who resent the power of its campaign co-ordi-

nator, Peter Mandelson. They have christened Mr Mandelson and his fellow-modernisers the "Millbank Tendency".

There could also be controversy over the name of the new headquarters - the Walworth Road building was renamed John Smith House in 1994, after the party's former leader. A Labour spokesman said the party planned to give its Millbank headquarters the same

name, but last night the owners, Legal & General, said it had no right to do so.

Several government departments have offices in the same building along with companies such as Vickers, the engineering firm which built it. It is thought they might object to the change.

Further trouble might be afoot because since Labour started work on its media cen-

tre in 1995 it has become a historic listed building.

Completed in 1963, it was among 40 post-war listed buildings picked for listing by English Heritage and is grade II listed, putting it among the top 5 per cent of historic buildings in Britain. Any changes - including new name plaques - would have to be approved by the Conservative-controlled Westminster City Council.

Legal & General's spokesman confirmed that Labour had taken out a further five-year option on the tower, but cast doubt on the possibility of a name change.

"In our view they have no re-naming rights outside the building. They haven't said anything to us about that. Anything they want to do with the outside of the building would have to be discussed with us," he said. The Millbank project had

aroused suspicions from the start that it was to be the party's headquarters. Although it was supposed to accommodate only the press office plus extra staff during the election, it can take up to 300 people - easily enough for the party's entire staff.

About £2m was spent on refurbishing two floors of the building, which houses the auditorium used for press conferences throughout the

election campaign. Labour occupies 25,000 square feet of offices, for which it has paid more than £500,000 over the past two years. The rent will go up later this year from £13.40 per square foot to £15.00.

Although Labour only moved to Walworth Road from Transport House in 1981, the decision to leave the headquarters will be a poignant one for many. Millbank has in-

creasingly been seen as the home of new Labour, while the party's roots remained in the building near Elephant and Castle in south London.

However, Millbank Tower is five minutes' walk from Westminster and has a commanding view of the Thames, while Walworth Road is two miles away and can boast only the lurid pink Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre.

مركز من الامم المتحدة

Scots line up for referendum battle

Stephen Goodwin

Barely will election posters have been torn from the lamp-posts in Scotland before voters are subjected to another bout of saturation campaigning.

The campaign for "yes" votes in a referendum for a Scottish parliament is already in motion and preparing for its formal launch in a fortnight's time.

Partnership for a Parliament has bided its time during the

warfare of the past six weeks in the hope of building an alliance of politicians from all parties as well as business, trade unions and the churches once the election dust has settled.

George Robertson, for one, Labour's spokesman for Scotland, would like to see pro-devolution Tories and Scottish National Party (SNP) members joining a broad coalition for a double yes vote - one for the Parliament and one for tax varying powers.

In a lecture 10 days ago, away from the heat of the hustings, Mr Robertson looked forward to a "more consensual model of politics" emerging in Scotland, notably as a result of the proportional representation system proposed for the parliament.

"I appreciate that for all of the political parties this will come as something of a culture shock - but it will ultimately be to Scotland's advantage if we can end the adversarial, yah-

boo politics which has come to typify Westminster," he said.

However a parliament on Edinburgh's Calton Hill is still some years off - 1999 is the target date - and for the next six months campaigners will be focused on the referendum planned for the autumn.

Partnership for a Parliament is the working title of the organising group for yes votes to the devolution scheme drawn up by the Scottish Constitutional Convention.

A catchier title will emerge before the launch on 15 May. A Tory victory would wreck the timetable but prospect of an alliance for reform would still be explored.

Chaired by Glasgow businessman Nigel Smith and with Esther Robertson, former co-ordinator of the Convention, as acting organiser, the group has set up a small office within walking distance of the proposed parliament building.

Some £130,000 has been

raised from unions and business together with a contribution for research from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust.

Four places have been left vacant on the steering group for Conservative and SNP figures to complete the spread of civil, political and business leaders involved.

Political parties are not formally represented but the group certainly has the support of Mr Robertson and Jim Wallace, leader of the Scottish

Liberal Democrats. It also has the blessing of the Constitutional Convention, which remains in being as the guardian of the home rule blueprint agreed in 1995, but is deliberately keeping at arms length from it.

The Convention is anathema to the SNP and the Tories who refused to participate in its work.

The key questions for the referendum lobby over the next few weeks is whether Tory and

SNP members will climb aboard and the scale of any "no" campaign. Ms Robertson said yesterday that if Michael Forsyth lost his Stirling seat a well-financed "say no" group would appear quickly.

"You can be certain of it. A clear majority of Scots want constitutional change. The challenge for us is to hold on to that support in the face of a fear campaign by the opposition and also voter fatigue," said Ms Robertson.

Confusion candidates deliver their spoils

Paul McCann

The Labour Party was inundated with calls from angry supporters in five constituencies yesterday after voters discovered they had voted for candidates confusingly calling themselves New Labour.

Most complaints were being made in Hammersmith and Fulham where William Johnson Smith, the son of Tory MP Geoffrey Johnson Smith, was standing as a New Labour candidate and took votes from the real Labour candidate, Iain Coleman.

In Cardiff South and Penarth the party was also receiving "loads and loads" of calls.

"I feel cheated," said Dr Anthony Young, a research biologist at St Thomas' Hospital in London. "I asked at the polling station for some clarification about which candidate was real Labour but they told me it is against the law to give any advice to voters."

"I went back into the polling booth and decided that Tony Blair is always seen with New Labour behind him so that must be the right candidate."

Dr Young only discovered his mistake after calling the local Labour Party to check.

"I regard myself as fairly intelligent," said Dr Young. "You only get to vote every five years. What this man has done is despicable and contemptuous. It makes a mockery of democracy." Dr Young is now trying to contact Mr Johnson Smith to tell him personally what he thinks of him.

A Labour Party spokesman said that while Hammersmith and Fulham was far down its list of target seats at 77, it was still eminently winnable without the confusion caused by Mr

Johnson Smith. It is a new seat which had a notional majority for the Conservative candidate, Matthew Carrington, of 7,174 from 1992.

In Cardiff South and Penarth the party confirmed that it had received calls from voters who were confused about the provenance of John Foreman, who described himself as "New Labour" on the ballot paper. Mr Foreman was an inactive member of the Labour Party, but gave the party no reason for standing against it.

"I think he just wanted to see his name on the ballot paper," said the real Labour candidate Alun Michael. The seat was a strong Labour seat with a majority of 10,000.

Other seats targeted by "New Labour" candidates were Cannock, Hackney South and Shoreditch and Bracknell.

The Conservatives too had their share of confusion candidates. In the safe Tory seat of Hove they faced an "Official Hove Conservative". And in both Brighton Pavilion and Winchester the man who started the fad for confusion candidates, Richard Huggett, was standing as a Conservative.

Mr Huggett stood in the 1994 European Parliament elections as a "Liberal Democrat". Because his name appeared above the real Liberal Democrat candidate's name on the ballot paper's alphabetical list he took 10,000 votes and stopped the party from taking the seat from the Conservatives.

The High Court later ruled that the fact that some voters might be confused by a candidate's chosen words of description did not amount to a breach of the Representation of the People Act.



Early riser: The first of the 48 registered voters in the hamlet of Ovington, north Essex, casting his ballot yesterday in the village's 11th-century St Mary's church. The Conservative Sir Alan Haselhurst was defending a 17,424 majority. Photograph: Brian Harris

Belfast's ballot: a tale of two cities

Ulster's tribes maintain their loyalties to reinforce the great divide

David McKitterick
Ireland Correspondent

If there is such a thing as passive hostility it was on show at the big White Rock polling station in West Belfast yesterday. Outside it was a shrine to Gerry Adams while inside was a Royal Ulster Constabulary stronghold. It was a little like Fort Apache, the Bronx.

Visitors could be forgiven for concluding that Adams was the only candidate standing. The Sinn Féin president's likeness were everywhere, posters all over the lampposts and two large drawings of him tied on to the railings of the graveyard opposite. There were no non-Adams posters.

The Sinn Féin caravan outside contained six women and a girl, one of the women organising sandwiches while others nursed large pieces of cardboard on their knees. Lists of streets, houses and voters

had been taped to each piece of cardboard.

On some pieces various names had been highlighted in yellow. On others a variety of highlighters had been used to colour-code the names of the voters. It all looked very complex and highly methodical.

At the gates of the building stood nine men, all Sinn Féin supporters, some handing out leaflets, some just standing around. There were no non-Adams supporters.

Voters walked through a car park and into a hall. To get there they had to pass through a small courtyard in which stood five policemen, all with revolvers, one nursing a rifle. There were no Adams supporters among them.

The voters ignored the police officers and the police ignored the voters. No words or glances passed between them: voters and police might have been invisible to each other.

Across the city, outside a polling station on the Limestone Road, a Protestant area of North Belfast, a single relaxed policeman cooed and talked baby-talk to two toddlers in a double pram: he was minding them while their mother was inside voting.

This little segment of the city is almost 100 per cent Protestant, and its Unionist MP is assured of re-election. But the nationalist vote in the constituency as a whole is rising steadily as the Catholic population increases and the Protestant community dwindles. Many of the more mobile Protestants have simply moved out.

An Ulster Unionist councillor lounged against the railings and worried about the demographics. "The worrying thing about this election is very few young people on our side [are] voting, very few. The vast majority here are all elderly - the young Prods just don't vote."

"Sinn Féin, now, would be all young, they've actually galvanised the young vote on their side."

He and another councillor are ferrying Protestant old people in to vote, one of them a lady of 82. This is essentially a Protestant polling station but a hundred yards up the road is a Catholic church hall where the Catholics, some of them indeed much younger, can be seen casting their votes.

One of the Unionist councillors pointed to a junction in the road and said: "I suppose that's the interface." It is a line as imaginary as the equator but in North Belfast it is full of meaning: houses close to it have grilles on the windows to keep out the bricks.

And on each side of it Belfast's two communities could be seen, in the city's mutually exclusive worlds, trooping dutifully in to vote against each other.



Home ground: Gerry Adams finds a warm welcome in West Belfast yesterday. Photograph: Martin McCullough

'Vote, then leave the polling station. Do not hang around for cappuccino'

First-timer Emma Forrest strode out bravely, armed with ideals, to vote Lib Dem

When I was 16 my two big passions were the Labour Party and the Manic Street Preachers. In both cases I have spent the last year sniffing. "Yeah, I used to like them... before they went all commercial and the message was watered down". The former, in an attempt to woo floating Tory voters, the latter to win over disillusioned Celine Dion fans.

I am the sad teenager who likes a band/political party until it looks as if they can actually win Brit awards/control of the country. And, voting for the first time yesterday, I could not go with Labour. They are too corporate. They are too Capital Radio.

Instead, I voted for the most radical of the contenders: the Liberal Democrats. I voted against the Tories, for a party considerably more left wing than new Labour. I do not want to be one of those people who moans "Well, I'd vote

for them if they had a chance of getting in." Here is a chance, I reasoned: it is mine and I am giving it to them. I walked to the polling station with a spring in my step and a newspaper in my bag because I was sure there would be queues. Nope, 9.30am and just me. Why had I got up early to wash my hair? I wanted to look nice for the ballot box, I guess.

All my life I've wanted to vote. Even in my wildest dreams I never imagined it could be this... underwhelming. The rules tacked to the wall said "Cast your vote. Leave the polling station". Do not hang around for cappuccino. I was vaguely expecting a medal. Not for voting Liberal Democrat. If my friends kept their word, I'm hardly the only one. But for turning up at

all. Because the ones who are kind of my friends but who I also kind of want to kick in the shins are all still saying "Why bother voting? They're all the same".

They are absolutely not all the same and deciding between Labour and the Liberals was tough. It came down to single issues and personalities. Paddy Ashdown has said emphatically that the homosexual age of consent should be 16, whereas Tony Blair did not even turn up to vote on it. It reminded me that there is an element to the Labour Party that hates gays and women.

And because John Prescott was rude to me and my friend Barbara at the Brit awards, even though we love him, and drunkenly told him so. Staggering to the toilets

we spotted a big, grumpy looking man with his arms folded across his chest. "Oh my God! It's John Prescott!" I squealed, before adding "but it might just be one of Oasis's bouncers". Barbara marched up to him and demanded "Excuse me, are you John Prescott or one of Oasis's bouncers?" "I'm John Prescott," he hissed. "Oh, my mate likes you."

"Oh," said John, through gritted teeth and ran like hell. Strike two against new Labour.

Don't get me wrong: I'm thrilled for Blair. I just hope he's not going to get accidentally locked in the toilet so Robin Cook can take over. And I'm glad I voted Liberal Democrat. Still, the impersonality of the voting booth, the way I was practically shoved out of the door as soon as it was done. Oh Paddy, do ring me and tell me you weren't just using me for my nubility.



Emma Forrest: Let down by the ballot box

Election? What election? - the don't know factor

Kim Sengupta

After six weeks of saturation media coverage, it is clear that many people have been totally turned off by the general election. Some, suffering from political fatigue, have decided to opt out altogether and not exercise their right to vote.

But, extraordinarily, it is also the case that the entire election blitz has passed by many people. Some are totally unaware what the election is about, and who is standing. Many do not have a clue what the parties' policies are.

On Monday in Bedford, one of the 100 marginals Labour must win to get a majority, I met a 22-year-old hotel worker with a wife and two babies to support, who is earning £3 an hour. Yet the young man, who has known nothing but Tory governments, is convinced that if Labour gets in he will lose his housing benefit and all state benefits would go to people on the dole.

He asked which day the election was, and then what would happen if Labour won. When told the Labour leader would be the next prime minister, he wanted to know who the leader was.

A minicab driver, Gerry, in Ilford, an Essex constituency Labour hopes to win, had been told that Tony Blair's victory would be followed by free travel for all on London Transport. Why should he vote Labour and put his livelihood in danger?

He could not bring himself to vote Conservative, so he would not vote at all. He is also trying to find alternate employment because of the "free

travel" threat. When asked who gave him this nugget of opposition transport policy, he recalled that it was a customer. Political ignorance is not determined purely on educational or class grounds. The day I met the £3-an-hour Bedford hotel worker, I ran into a customer in a bar in Fleet Street much frequented by people allegedly in the know such as journalists and lawyers.

A barrister was saying that he was not going to vote Conservative because "they are a shambles". But people would be mad to vote for Labour because "Blair would be out on his ear, with some leftie like Ken Livingstone taking over within months".

He apparently got this from "security sources". The same sources had also revealed to him that more than 40 Labour MPs were suspected former Soviet spies. The barrister is an officer in the Territorial Army.

David Denver, a reader in politics at Lancaster University, said: "There is no doubt that a lot of people, especially young people, have got no interest in the electoral process. They do not feel an interest in the question of government and effectively they have fallen outside the system."

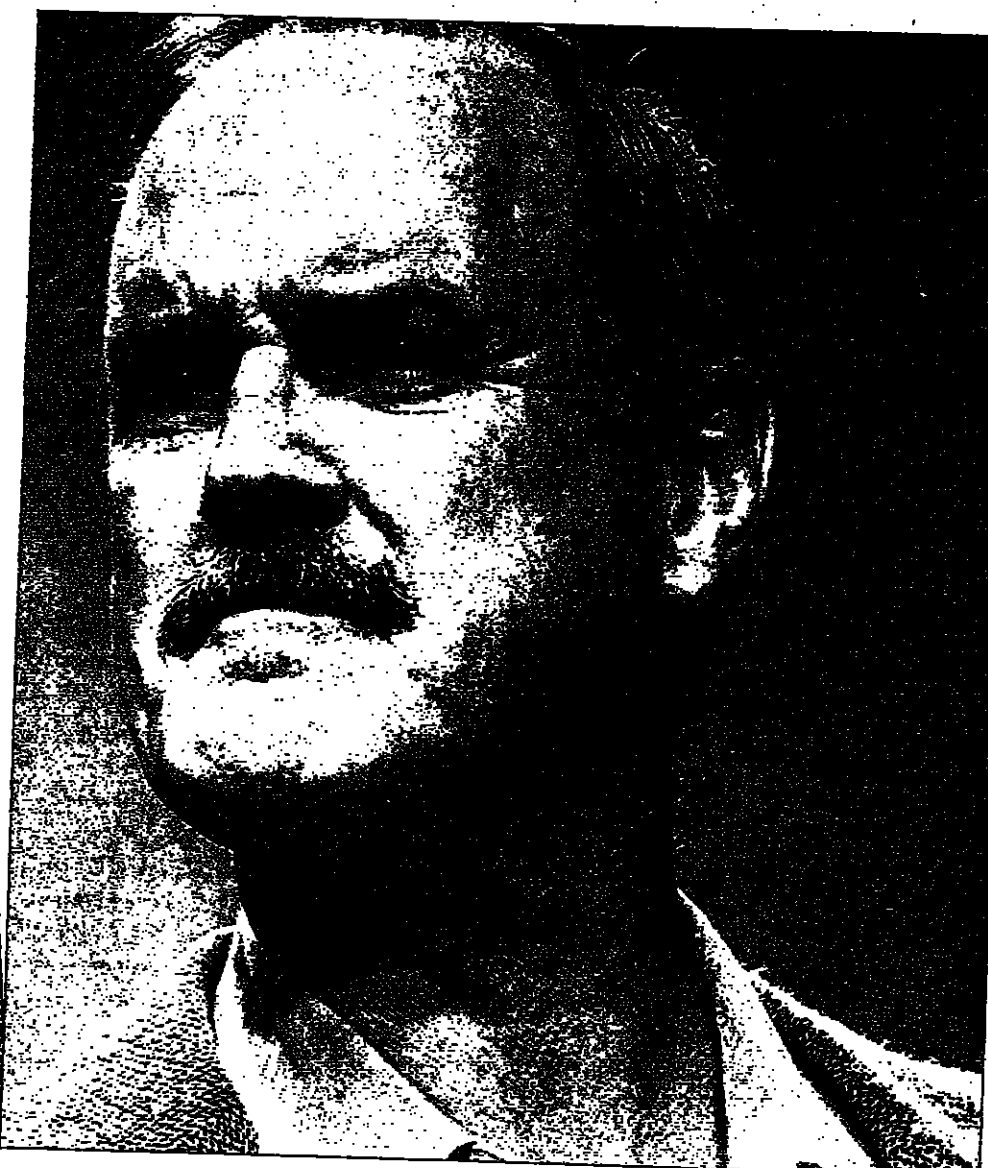
Mr Denver, convenor of the Election Studies Group, the body of senior psephologists, continued: "These people have been disenfranchised because they tend to read tabloid newspapers, normally from back to front, and thus would not have access to the kind of information they would need to make political judgements."

Laughter, tears, sleaze and spin:



View from the top, faces in the crowd: John Major on the 50th floor of Canary Wharf (left) and (right) the Tory party faithful listen to their leader at the Royal Albert Hall, early in the campaign

Photographs: Tom Pilston



High drama, Whitehall farce: Neil and Christine Hamilton on the warpath (left). John Cleese stands tall for the Liberal Democrats (right) Photographs: Peter Macdiarmid/ Nicola Kurtz



Past: Baroness Thatcher (above left) campaigns in Aldershot, Hampshire Photograph: Tom Pilston

Present: Michael Heseltine (below left) bullish in Castle Douglas, Scotland Photograph: Drew Farrell

Future? A lonely poster (right) in a field in Great Stukeley, Huntingdonshire - just a few yards from John Major's constituency home Photograph: Brian Harris



the long trail to the day of destiny



Arms and the man, pressing the flesh: Tony Blair embraces the electorate in Mitcham (left) and takes an opportunity to grab hold of the feel-good factor (right)

Photographs: David Rose



Young hearts, tired bodies: A youthful Liberal Democrat (left). Paddy Ashdown's gruelling schedule catches up with him (right)

Photographs: Kalpesh Lathigra/ John Voos



Dog days: A bulldog (left) is a spin-doctor's best friend
Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Flag days: A Liberal Democrat (above right) gets it in the neck at a party rally on the last day of campaigning
Photograph: John Voos

Heady days: Labour was able to count on hundreds of Asian voters when Tony Blair arrived in Leicester
Photograph: David Rose





Election exodus: Air travellers at Birmingham Airport yesterday were bent on getting to the beach rather than the polling booth

Photograph: Jason Nye

Getaway crowd vote for the departure lounge

Democratic ennui has prompted a holiday exodus, write Lucy Ward and Jojo Moyes

Sun, sea, sangria and the promise of no swingometers yesterday drew queues of holidaymakers to flee the country on polling day for a Mediterranean break. After weeks besieged by pollsters, canvassers and baby-kissing politicians, travellers were swapping polling cards for boarding cards in the rush to get out before the count.

Among beach-bound Midlandsers crowding the check-in desks at Birmingham Airport were plenty for whom packing sun-oil had proved more pressing than exercising their democratic rights. Barry Camp, a scaffolder, travelling light with just a carry-on holdall for a week in Majorca, admitted he had been nowhere near a polling booth. "I can't be bothered. I know it's wrong really but I've got other things on my mind." Mr Camp, from Leicester, had booked his break on the eve of polling day after the six-week campaign finally frayed his nerves. "I'll be staying with a friend who runs a bar and I probably won't know and he won't tell me back."

None of the five eligible members of the Tate and Rose families, off to the Med together in matching Wolverhampton Wanderers shirts, had been out to vote before checking in. "We are sick of the election," said Denysa Tate. "We are going to Spain and we won't be phoning home to find out the result. We have

got two weeks away from the whole thing."

Jane and Kelly Yardley, mother and daughter, booked their week in Palma before election day was announced but were unruffled by the clash of dates. "We've not voted - we were busy packing this morning," said Kelly, 19, an accounts trainee. "It doesn't really matter who gets in - it never makes any difference." Her mother agreed: "I am thoroughly sick of the whole thing. I'll be lying on that beach and I can tell you I won't be thinking about John Major."

Michelle Jamieson, 24, heading for Malaga with three girlfriends, admitted she had forgotten it was polling day until her mother reminded her on the way to the airport. "To be honest, if it came to a choice between voting and going off my head with sangria or snogging by the pool, I know which one I'd go for."

Only Marie Finn, 21, on her way to Spain, confessed to a twinge of remorse after avoiding the polling station. She confessed: "I feel really guilty if it all rests on one vote."

There's some consolation for the election losers: Thomson are offering the 3,061 unsuccessful candidates a chance to escape to Majorca, writes Sam Coates. With their spouses, they can apply for one of the 320 places available, allocated on a first-come first-served basis.

Left-wingers slip through Blair's net

Job Rabkin

At least seven left-wingers have slipped through New Labour's tight selection net, designed to weed out possible embarrassments to a Blair government, according to a survey by *The Independent*.

The newcomers will add to the core of left-wing MPs, including Ken Livingstone, who plan to set up a "1997 Committee" of backbenchers to form a bulwark to the leadership.

Interviewed in *Red Pepper* magazine in March, Mr Livingstone said the committee would be based on the Tory 1922 Committee. "The Millbank tendency will realise they need our support to get their programmes through and will find themselves under attack if they do reactionary things," he said. Millbank strategists were careful to ensure that left-wing candidates remained invisible during the course of the campaign. Tony Blair's battle buses carefully avoided visiting their constituencies, preferring to be seen with candidates with solid Blairite credentials.

In safe Labour seats vacated by retiring MPs, two known left-wingers will take up their seats in the House of Commons - Hazel Blears, who stood in Salford East and Marsha Singh, the candidate for Bradford West.

In the 57 key marginals two left-wingers have been identified: Ann Cryer, widow of left-wing MP Bob Cryer, who contested Keighley (43rd on Labour's target list) and John McDonnell, a former deputy to Ken Livingstone at the GLC who stood in Hayes and Harlington (2nd on Labour's target list). The three others are Iain Coleman in Hammsmith and Fulham (77th on the target

The candidates who got away and may join Ken Livingstone's 1997 committee of backbenchers



Harold Best
Age: 57
Seat: Leeds North West (target seat number 91)
Opponent: Dr Keith Hampson (Con maj, 7,671)
An electrical technician by trade, he has a long history on the left of the Labour Party. A member of the Communist Party until 1956, he has been a trade unionist, lay preacher and ethical socialist. He was linked to the emergence of the New Left in the 1960s and was a friend of the left-wing historian EP Thompson.



Hazel Blears
Age: 41
Seat: Salford
Opponent: Elliot Bishop (Lab maj, 12,987)
She is a solicitor and chair of the North-West Regional Labour Party. Born in Salford, she has been active in the Labour Party for 20 years. In 1992 she contested the marginal seat of Bury South. Although she has undergone a transformation in image in recent years, she was an active left-winger during the late 1980s. She opposed the abolition of Clause IV.



Ann Cryer
Age: 58
Seat: Keighley, West Yorkshire
Opponent: Gary Waller (Con, maj 3,500)
She was a researcher and personal assistant to her husband Bob Cryer MP, who died in a car accident in April 1994. Local activists were eager for her to stand in his place rather than a candidate imposed from Millbank and she finally accepted after being convinced by Tony Benn. She describes herself as a "lifetime rebel".



John McDonnell
Age: 46
Seat: Hayes and Harlington
Opponent: Andrew Rafter (Con, maj 44)
John McDonnell was deputy leader of the GLC under Ken Livingstone. He has called for the renationalisation of the railways, water, gas and electricity and has opposed the leadership on Clause IV, tax, education and local government. He was sued for libelling Tory MP Terry Dicks after the last election and had to pay £78,000 costs and damages.



Marsha Singh
Age: 43
Seat: Bradford West
Opponent: Mohammed Riaz (Con, maj 9,502)
Marsha Singh was educated at the University of Loughborough and works as a senior development manager in the National Health Service. A secular socialist, Mr Singh is opposed to privatisation and in favour of redistributive taxation. He also voted with his local constituency party against the abolition of Clause IV.



Paul Truswell
Age: 41
Seat: Pudsey
Opponent: Peter Bone (Con maj, 8,972)
A former journalist and local government officer in Wakefield, he is chair of the Community Benefits and Rights Committee on Wakefield Council and a member of the civil rights group Liberty. His personal interests include health and social services, poverty and community development. He is widely respected as a principled left-winger and able politician.

dependent journalist and partner of Ed Balls, Gordon Brown's right-hand man, was shortlisted for the seat but lost to Helen Jones, a solicitor from Widnes.

Labour Party sources in Warrington say that Ms Jones - described as a "traditional tax-and-spend, egalitarian left-winger" - became a champion of a revolt against the imposition of candidates by Millbank. Members organised hard to get a local candidate selected.

Yvette Cooper was later selected to fight Pontefract and Castleford, a safe Labour seat with a majority of 23,495.

Batley and Spen was another seat the Blair buses decided not to call in at. The Labour candidate, Mike Wood, was selected in July 1995 over a favoured Millbank candidate, Catherine Ashton. Barry Salmon, editor of the *Dewsbury Reporter*, told *The Independent* a visit from the leadership could have made all the difference to the campaign. Mr Wood stood against Elizabeth Peacock, the maverick Tory who has a strong personal following and made substantial mileage by opposing the Government on key issues.

Terry Tordoff, Mr Wood's agent said Tony Blair was "quietly confident" that Labour would take the seat. Switching voters were being carefully targeted. "Millbank have quietly told us to get on with it," he said yesterday.

A Labour spokesman said: "All candidates supported the party's manifesto and were democratically selected under the one-member, one-vote system." Late cases were decided by a National Executive Committee by-election subcommittee which provided a shortlist of candidates.

Brave new world for the next generation of lobby fodder...

Chris Moncrieff
Press Association

There are few more pathetic sights than that of a new MP standing in the Members' Lobby of the House of Commons, confused and alarmed, a little boy/girl lost amid the overwhelming grandeur and majesty of Parliament.

A few days earlier they were bellowing through a loud-speaker at their campaign-saturated would-be electors, feted on all sides, monarchs of all they surveyed.

Now they are cruelly brought down to size, the dazed new pupils. Lost in a myriad of corridors, not knowing which way to turn or what to do, they are pitiful figures engulfed by meaningless rules and incomprehensible procedures, and a building which makes the Hampton Court maze seem a cakewalk.

Only 48 hours earlier, they were on the brink of putting the country to rights, and after that the world. Now, all these heady ambitions must take second place to finding the loo and

A rough guide to Westminster for the 1997 intake of novice MPs

somewhere to buy a sandwich. All MPs complain, later on, that no one ever tells them what to do on arrival. Like first-time sex, one of them once told me, they thrash around in the dark and hope against hope that it will all come right in the end.

Well, they need complain no more. Here are a few tips for the wet-behind-the-ears brigade:
■ The very first essential, especially if you are in the majority party, is to find a "pal", an opponent to enable you to duck off votes together. An MP without a pal is unmistakable - a fretful, sleepless individual, who is compelled to live, night and day, at Westminster.
■ Be ingratiating, even unctuous, towards the police and uniformed doorkeepers, and especially to the MP in charge of allocating office space. They have subtle powers to make your political life hell-on-earth.
■ Find out where the vote office is (for documents), the

Post Office (for mail), and "The Board" (for messages). Always check carefully before you respond to a call from a "constituent" in the Central Lobby. You may find yourself lumbered with a crank.

■ Tear up all junk-mail, do not reply to green-ink correspondence, do not take cash for questions, and do not give your phone number to strangers.

■ Forget about your private life. You have just ended it. Any amours on the side should be conducted with the utmost discretion, or preferably not at all. Opt for the celibate life.

■ Don't forget that in Annie's Bar (a windowless, subterranean dump), the haunt of backs and MPs, a round includes everyone who is in the bar at the time. Once in this "prison", you have to buy your way out. It sometimes costs hours - and a lot of money.
■ Should you wish to escape from the press, go to the Ter-

race (reporters are banned). Other safe havens are the tea-room, the smoking room and the Members' Dining Room. But be warned: reporters tend to lurk and pounce at the most awkward moments and in the most surprising places.
■ If you want a reputation for being cocky and arrogant, make your maiden speech early. The wisest course is to wait until you know what you are talking about.

■ Do not try to flout and criticise rules which may seem pointless. If you antagonise the Speaker, your life will be a misery. And recognise now that the power of the backbencher is relatively zero. You would have more power on a parish council - and that is not a joke.

■ Always toe the party line. Remember, until and unless you get that great call to serve on the front bench, you are simply lobby fodder as far as the whips are concerned. Indeed, however grand you become, you remain the tool of the whips, who do not care how important you think you are. Welcome to Westminster.

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Today, dozens of defeated MPs are waking up to the realisation that it is all over. Years of hectic schedules, weeks on the hustings, a night of high anxiety and then - bang. Nothing.

Those election-night scenes, played out again last night, are familiar. The candidates ranged nervously around the returning officer, the huge cheer as the victor is announced, the magnanimous, choking speech of congratulation from the vanquished one.

Many will have been expecting this, of course. But among the hardest-hit will be those who never believed they could lose. For some, there will be the added humiliation of watching the chauffeur drive the ministerial car away for the last time.

Most will pick themselves up quickly and a few will be back on the national stage in new roles within months. Others will feel bereaved for years.

One of those in the first category in 1993 was Rosie

Hard times ahead for ousted MPs who never thought they could lose

Barnes, the SDP MP for Greenwich in south London, who suffered a 1,000-vote defeat at the hands of Labour's Nick Raynsford. Within two days, though, she was on the road to a new life as the director of Birthright - now Well-being - an obstetrics charity.

While some struggle to keep smiles on their faces, Ms Barnes did not mind letting her disappointment show. After the count, she went to bed for a couple of sleepless hours and then got up, put on her make-up and set out for a round of pre-arranged interviews.

"When I came home, early afternoon on Friday, that was it. There was nothing left to be done," she said. "I felt sadness combined with relief."

She had prepared herself for the possibility of defeat, but the next day she felt tired and deflated. On the Sunday, her husband suggested a walk and a drink in a country pub. Flicking

through the newspaper, she spotted an advertisement for the Birthright job. And that was it, she says. Back on course. No regrets. She has now left party politics completely.

Anthony Beaumont-Dark, the Tory MP who lost his Birmingham Selly Oak seat to Labour's Lynne Jones in 1992, is equally at ease with his loss. He seems to bear no resentment towards the constituents he represented for 13 years, although many who backed him in public voted against him in the privacy of the polling booth.

"One day I met a woman who told me what a marvellous MP I had been and how I would certainly get her vote. Two days later I was canvassing her road and there were Labour posters in her windows," he said.

He knew he was going to lose, he says, despite all the encouragement he received. Boundary changes had turned his seat into a winner for Labour. A former

stockbroker, he now works three or four days a week as chairman of an investment trust, lecturer and deputy chairman of a property company.

"It's worse for ministers. Some of them are not only losing their seat but their jobs and their chauffeur-driven cars. Suddenly they are not important," he said.

While MPs with other interests bounce back easily, some do not. Clement Freud, the former Liberal MP who lost his Cambridgeshire North East seat in 1987, said yesterday that he could not cross Westminster Bridge for years because he felt so upset.

Come Monday, a number of embarrassed headhunters will be taking calls from seafloor former MPs. They will spend much of the day trying to explain that those highly paid city directorships are simply not there for the picking.

"If you have got no other qualification except being an MP, you are 45 to 50 and you have youngsters to educate, you've got real problems," Mr Beaumont-Dark said.

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Homeward bound: A handcuffed Archie 'Mad Dog' McCafferty under the guard of Australian police during his incarceration

Australia puts mass murderer on flight to UK

Killer loses deportation fight after 23 years in jail

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

"Mad Dog" McCafferty, the multiple murderer being deported from Australia after spending 23 years in jail, is due to arrive in Britain today.

Archie McCafferty, 49, is expected to return to his home city of Glasgow after losing his appeal against deportation.

McCafferty was convicted of the murder of three men and the manslaughter of a fellow prisoner. He was granted parole last month.

Despite the fact that he emigrated to Australia at the age

of 10, McCafferty never obtained citizenship and his pleas to remain with his elderly mother have been rejected.

Glasgow city council will be obliged to house him on his return, despite protests from local people. He is reported to be on a flight accompanied by three Australian Immigration Police officers, due to arrive at Heathrow this morning.

McCafferty murdered three men while high on drugs in 1973. He later claimed that he had heard the voice of his son, Craig, who had died aged six weeks, telling him he would be reincarnated if he killed seven times.

While imprisoned in Parramatta jail, he was convicted of the manslaughter of another man. His release followed an appeal for forgiveness to the relatives of his victims before the New South Wales Parole Board in Sydney on 18 April.

He apologised for his "horrific crime" and insisted he was no longer a danger. "I realise the chaos and trauma I have created in the families of the three victims," he said. "I can't undo what I have done, but I sincerely apologise from the bottom of my heart."

"I am a changed man and I deserve a second chance of life. I am an older man and I am not a psychopathic killer. To keep me in jail and to keep your hatred in your hearts will destroy you too."

Psychiatric reports indicated that McCafferty was free from mental illness, and no longer heard voices. The decision to grant parole was greeted with

anger by the relatives of his victims, who shouted abuse as he was led away.

McCafferty wanted to stay in Australia, where he had been offered jobs and a place to live. But despite living in the country for 39 years, the Australian High Commission in London has said that because of the length of time McCafferty has spent in prison, he has never been eligible for Australian citizenship.

A spokeswoman for the Australian Department of Immigration said yesterday: "Mr McCafferty left Australia for Great Britain today. He has three escort officers with him, who will accompany him to his destination."

"He was taken from Parklea correction centre to Long Bay jail, and from Long Bay to the airport."

As well as offering McCafferty accommodation, Glasgow city council has assigned him social workers to help start his new life. The council has a legal duty to offer assistance to released prisoners for up to 12 months, if requested.

A local councillor said he objected to any moves to re-house McCafferty. Paul Martin, who represents the city's Royston district, said: "If they are so satisfied he is rehabilitated why don't they keep him in Australia?"

Mr Martin said he understood McCafferty would not be given mainstream council housing, but would be offered supported accommodation of the type available to offenders freed from British jails.

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Surgeon says doctors acted too late for girl

Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

A leading liver transplant surgeon yesterday accused colleagues who refused to operate on a dying 15-year-old girl of making their decision on moral rather than medical grounds.

Professor Roger Williams, head of the liver unit at King's College Hospital, London, told a fatal accident inquiry into the death of Michelle Paul, 15, who suffered liver failure after taking half an ecstasy tablet, that worries about her family background should have played no part in the decision as to whether to give her a transplant.

Contradicting an earlier claim by the transplant surgeon Dr Hilary Sanfey, who headed the team at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, Professor Williams said Michelle showed no clear sign of irreversible brain damage and she should have been put on the list for the operation. Her family claim that she was denied a transplant on moral grounds because of her mother's and sister's histories of drug taking.

Professor Williams said there were indications for many days that Michelle needed a transplant and accused doctors of not reacting fast enough to her condition. If a transplant had been done promptly she would have had a 75-85 per cent chance of survival. It would still have been possible on the day before she died - 27 November 1995 - but the chances of success would have been less than 50 per cent.

Giving evidence on the sixth



Michelle Paul, 15. Died 23 days after taking ecstasy

day of the inquiry at Aberdeen Sheriff Court, Professor Williams said the pupils of Michelle's eyes were still reacting on the 26 November, the day before she died. "There were no clear signs that this patient had suffered irreversible brain damage."

He added that his views would be supported by the vast majority of hepatologists around the world and that the General Medical Council made it clear that patients should be given the benefit of the doubt in times of medical need.

Regarding the notes Dr Sanfey had made about the case, he said: "It could not have been a clearer statement of a personal opinion... To me it is very clear that a transplant was being looked at and was excluded on the basis of the family background."

The inquiry continues.

Arcadian idyll saved from the bulldozers

Louise Jury

Villagers from a community once described as Arcadia, the legendary Greek idyll, yesterday won a last-ditch appeal to the House of Lords to save their homes.

The residents of Holt's Field near Swansea, west Wales, were last night celebrating their success in saving their unusual properties from the bulldozer.

The 14-acre site is one of the few surviving developments of wooden chalets from between the wars. The homes have been praised by Prince Charles's ar-

chitectural magazine, *Perspectives*, for their eco-friendliness.

Six years ago a property company, Elitestone, bought the land and announced plans to repossess a number of the properties, demolish them and build luxury flats instead.

The Law Lords ruled yesterday that the residents were entitled to the protection of the 1977 Rent Act, overturning a Court of Appeal decision that they were not protected tenants because the chalets rested on concrete pillars, making the properties more like mobile homes.

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May Ball madness as south prepares for hosepipe bans

Nicholas Schoon

By the end of this month, more than a million people will be covered by sprinkler bans if the run of dry weather continues.

A second Channel island may declare a hosepipe and sprinkler ban today because of the deepening drought. Guernsey's water board brought in island-wide restrictions on water use yesterday, the first in Britain this year, and Jersey's board will meet today to discuss whether one is needed.

Most water companies on the British mainland say there is no likelihood of any restrictions and drought orders, provided something like average rainfall resumes. The Meteorological Office is forecasting a more normal May, after a January, March and April which were extremely dry – although February had well above average rainfall.

The most vulnerable areas are in south-east England. Southern Water already has a sprinkler ban covering 830,000 customers in East and West Sussex which dates back to last summer.

The Sutton and East Surrey Water Company, serving more than 600,000 people on London's southern fringe and green belt area, will probably be the next in line. A spokesman said the need for a

sprinkler ban was being considered on a daily basis. "There is a strong likelihood restrictions will be necessary," he said.

The last 24 months has been the driest such period in England and Wales since reliable records began more than two centuries ago. And since 1988, annual rainfall has been below the long-term average in each calendar year apart from 1994.

Even before this recent spell of dry years began, London received less rainfall in the average year than New York, Rome, Lisbon and Paris, according to the Meteorological Office.

But climate scientists say the chain of English droughts cannot yet be attributed to man-made climate change caused by a build up of heat trapping gases, such as carbon dioxide, in the atmosphere.

Dr Geoffrey Jenkins of the Meteorological Office's Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction said yesterday: "We would expect less rain to fall here as the climate changes world-wide, but not this much – it's already greater than we'd anticipate."

In other words, the drought could be a blip like the 18-month "Great Drought" of 1975 and 1976, which was followed by a return to average rainfall.

Climatologists are confident that the slow, jerky rise in temperatures world-wide is linked to increasing at-

mospheric pollution by carbon dioxide and other substances – and this trend will continue and accelerate.

But their supercomputer models do not yet provide credible predictions of the detailed impact on individual continents, let alone on small countries such as the United Kingdom, which covers only 1,000th of the globe's surface.

In Guernsey, the new restrictions go well beyond a sprinkler ban. Car washes have to use their own supply or cease operating, swimming pools cannot be filled or topped up, and washing cars, boats, aircraft and buildings with a hose are all forbidden.

The island has had water bans in four of the last seven years. Colin Gaudin, the water board's engineer and manager, said he was looking into increasing the size or number of reservoirs, or at the possibility of building a desalination plant to turn seawater into fresh water. The island hosted a prototype which closed in the 1980s.

Neighbouring Jersey has a working plant which can supply 1.5 million gallons of freshwater a day – a quarter of the island's peak demand. But it is expensive to run because it burns large quantities of oil, so the water board uses it as little as possible. Ian James, the managing director, said the board would meet today and restrictions were on the agenda.



Cooling off: A young woman jumping into the River Cherwell from Magdalen Bridge in Oxford, early yesterday morning. She was taking part in the traditional May Day celebrations. Photograph: Tim Ockenden/PA

Anxiety gene turns out a bit of a worry

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

It's all rather worrying really. Last year scientists in the US and Germany announced they had found an "anxiety" gene – which played a part in determining how anxious people were, according to psychological tests measuring a trait called "harm avoidance".

But now another team of scientists, based in Jerusalem, say that direct measurement of 120 people with and without that gene showed no correlation between their anxiety levels and the gene's presence.

So is it worrying that the anxiety gene appears to have disappeared? According to one author of the latest study, Richard Ebstein of the Sarah Herzog Memorial Hospital, it may only mean that the gene affects anxiety in some groups but not others; and one of the authors of the original study suggested that the latest project would not have detected the effect anyway.

But significantly, this is the second time since November that a follow-up study for a "personality gene" has failed to find it. Ironically, the previous failure was trying to confirm a

Body Clock ticks on

Genes help us to tell the time by keeping our "circadian clock" running, new research has shown.

American researchers have discovered the functions of two genes which may explain how almost every organism on Earth has a built-in ability to monitor time on a 24-hour, day-to-night basis – even when kept in complete darkness.

The first gene seems to act as an independent timer, like a clockspring; the other is in effect a gear cog which keeps the clock running.

The team found clock malfunction was linked to seasonal affective disorder and various sleep and mental disorders.

finding claimed by Dr Ebstein – that there is, or was, a gene for "novelty-seeking", including excitability and impulsiveness.

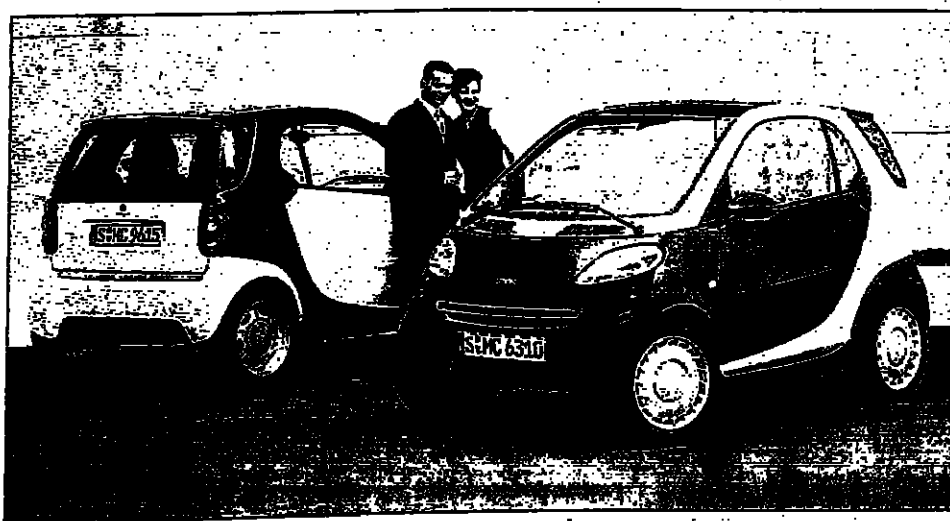
Claims in 1995 that there is a "gay gene" on the X chromosome have also not been confirmed by later studies.

Dean Hamer of the Nation-

al Cancer Institute, one author of last year's study – and also a co-author of the original "gay gene" paper – said Dr Ebstein's result was meaningless because it used too few people. The original study investigated 505 people using three psychological tests, whereas the new one, published this month in *Molecular Psychiatry*, only looked at 120.

According to Dr Hamer, even with the 505 people in last year's study the effect was barely noticeable. Dr Ebstein commented: "There is now some element of doubt [about the original study] but it doesn't mean they're wrong." Differences in genetic backgrounds and environment could mean the gene influences the anxiety trait differently in some groups.

The gene itself lies on chromosome 17 and plays a role in a brain communication system that takes the neurotransmitter serotonin – the "pleasure chemical" – back into brain cells. The gene itself comes in two forms, "short" and "long", so it seemed logical the short version would lead to less available serotonin – and so more readily to a state of anxiety. But Dr Ebstein said he couldn't find the least sign of the effect in his group.



Smart car: Smart and Mercedes Benz join forces to breathe new life into city driving.

Smart move for watch that turned into a car

Garvin Green
Motoring Editor

The most radical car to be sold in Europe in decades – and the most environmentally friendly – has just been unveiled by its makers. The new Smart, a joint venture between Mercedes-Benz and the Swiss company SMH, makers of the Swatch watch, will go on sale in mainland Europe next spring.

Just 2.5m – or a touch over 8ft – long, the Smart is an odd-looking two-seater city car. According to Nicolas Hayek, head of SMH and

vice-chairman of Smart, more than 80 per cent of cars used in urban areas are occupied by the driver alone. "The Smart therefore makes sense in today's motoring environment," he says.

Mr Hayek also expects the growing number of solo households – young people, singles, older people without children – to be natural Smart buyers.

Power comes from a turbo-charged three-cylinder petrol engine, claimed to give 70mpg. A 90mpg diesel follows in 1999. Performance is reasonable: 0-35mph in six

seconds and a top speed of 80mph. The Smart comes with anti-lock brakes and airbags as standard.

The car will be built at a new factory in Hambach, in the Lorraine in France. Sales initially will be restricted to eight mainland European countries, priced between DM16,000 and DM20,000 depending on local taxes (£5,800-£7,300).

There are no firm plans for UK sales, but if the car proves a hit on the Continent, there's little doubt that it will come here, probably in the year 2000.

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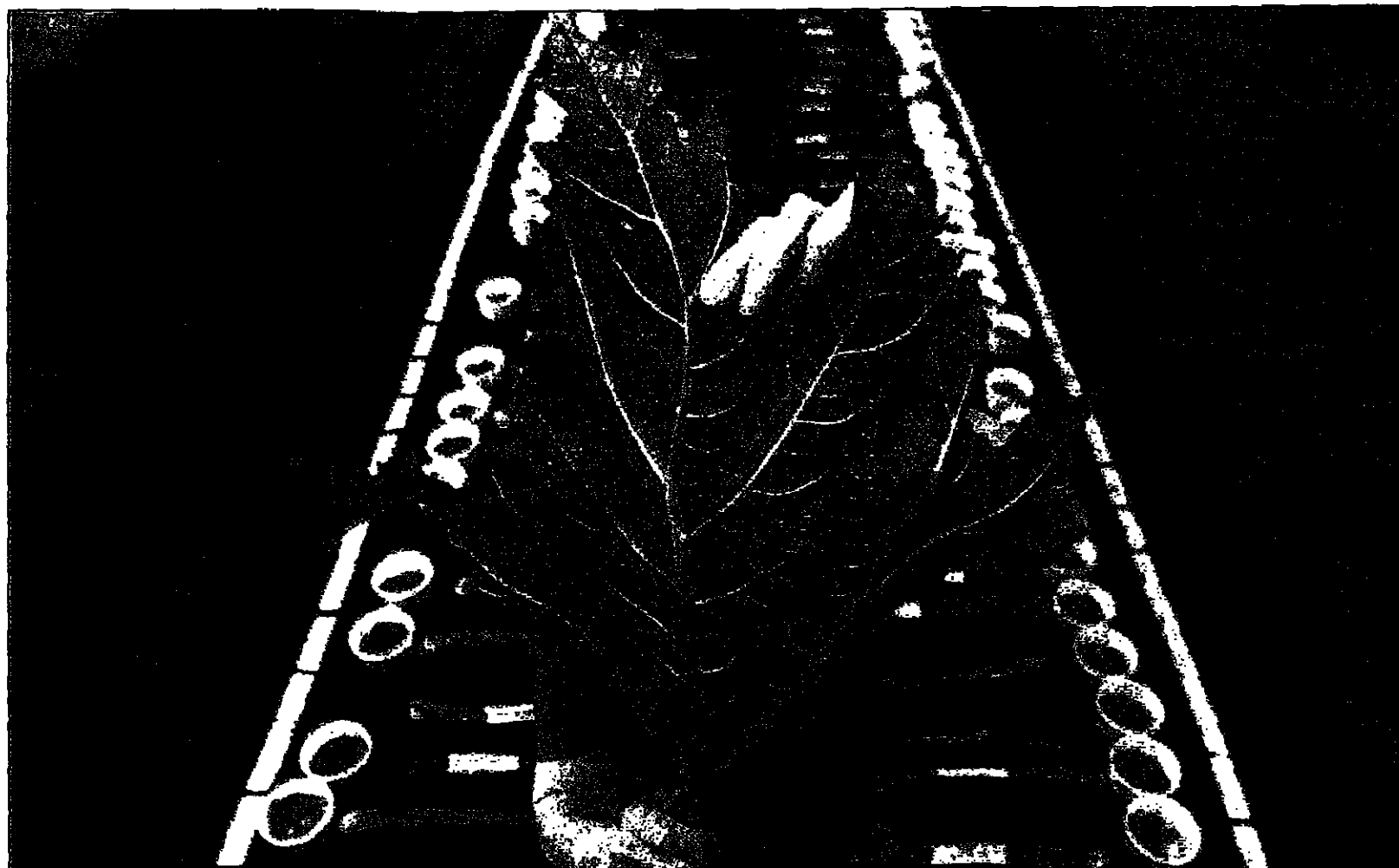
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Talking rhubarb: Some of the 150 varieties on show at the National Rhubarb Festival in Harrogate

Photograph: John Angerson/Guzeilan

New concern at side-effects of hay fever drugs

Researchers yesterday warned that more than one popular hay fever remedy sold without prescription in chemists' shops may have potentially serious side effects.

Last month the Department of Health announced that it intended to withdraw the drug terfenadine from over-the-counter sale because of safety fears.

The Medicines Control Agency is expected to make the drug available on prescription only, following a period of consultation. Experts advising the Government said that other hay fever remedies should be considered for as alternatives if there was any doubt about prescribing terfenadine.

Researchers call for closer look at all antihistamines

But yesterday doctors in Sweden published the results of a study which showed that some of the suggested alternatives may have similar problems. The study reviewed data from 17 countries on reported side effects by people taking five antihistamines - including terfenadine.

Researchers found that the drugs collectively caused an increased risk of heart abnormalities and death, albeit a small one - less than 0.25 spontaneous adverse reactions per million daily doses sold.

Besides terfenadine, the drugs loratadine and astemizole had the highest rates of adverse reaction. Astemizole is already under close review in the UK because of its potential to upset heart rhythms.

A closer analysis of 57 reports of heart irregularities associated with loratadine showed that in 27 cases there was mention of a reaction caused by interaction with other drugs.

Five of these patients had in fact died, said the paper, which is published in the latest edition of the *Lancet* medical journal.

The researchers, Professor Ralph Edwards and Marie Lindquist from the World

Health Organisation's international drug monitoring centre at Uppsala in Sweden, concluded: "These crude rates reflect doctors' concerns with these products, but do not provide a definite answer."

"Nevertheless, the data indicate that some of the alternatives to terfenadine may have similar problems, suggesting that thorough consideration of the comparative benefit-risk profile of all non-sedating antihistamines is wise."

Boots said that both loratadine and astemizole were sold over the counter.

Loratadine was contained in two products, a Boots own brand, Hayfever Relief All Day Antihistamine, and the product Claritin. Astemizole was sold under the brand names Pollen-eze and Hismanal.

Boots said that new advice had recently gone out to pharmacists to question patients about their medical history before selling them astemizole products. No such advice was recommended for loratadine.

A spokeswoman said: "With any product we obviously keep a close eye open and monitor developments, and should there be any problems we will act accordingly. We do very much take the view that the MCA is the governing body with the expertise and judgment to decide what controls to exercise on medicines."

Boots has removed terfenadine products from public display in its stores. Customers are only sold them after consultation with the pharmacist.



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Prison officers vilified over hospital regime

Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

Staff at Britain's three top security hospitals, which house some of the country's most notorious criminals, are accused today of running a campaign of intimidation to preserve their jobs overseeing an oppressive and authoritarian regime.

Efforts by senior managers to raise the standard of care in the institutions, which doctors say would improve safety, have been met by obstruction and threats, according to Professor Elaine Murphy, former vice-chairman of the Mental Health Act Commission.

One senior manager who sought police advice after being threatened found a fake grenade under his car. Other staff have received hate mail and complained of victimisation and bullying.

Professor Murphy, chairman of the City and Hackney Community Health Services Trust, says in the *British Medical Journal* that a large group of staff at Broadmoor, Rampton and Ashworth, have a damaging influence on standards of care through their authoritarian and denigrating attitude to patients.

Echoing repeated criticisms by the Mental Health Act Commission over more than a decade, she says the hospitals suffer from an "impoverished regime, overly restrictive regulations and lack of therapeutic optimism" - the blame for which must be laid at the door

of the Prison Officers' Association (POA) which has 1,000 members in the three hospitals.

Until the mid-1980s, the hospitals - which have been the subject of repeated scandals - were run by the Home Office as an extension of the Prison Service but were taken over by the NHS last year. But although hospital staff are officially designated as nurses, many have retained the membership, and outlook, of the POA.

Calling on the next Secretary of State for Health to derecognise the POA, Professor Murphy says the union must be ousted or the hospitals closed and their inmates moved elsewhere if the culture and values are to change. The most dangerous mentally disordered offenders are now cared for in regional secure units, NHS and private psychiatric hospitals which run more liberal regimes but with no less safety and without the problems that have dogged the special hospitals.

Professor Murphy adds: "The choice is a stark one: either the hospitals must close or they must change completely."

Broadmoor hospital and the Prison Officers Association yesterday dismissed Professor Murphy's views as out of date. She was a member of the 1992 Ashworth inquiry which exposed a brutal regime, and the POA said her comments dated back to before then. It added: "This is a scurrilous attack. Her allegations of threats and intimidation are clearly unfounded."

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Needless to say I didn't have my camera with me.

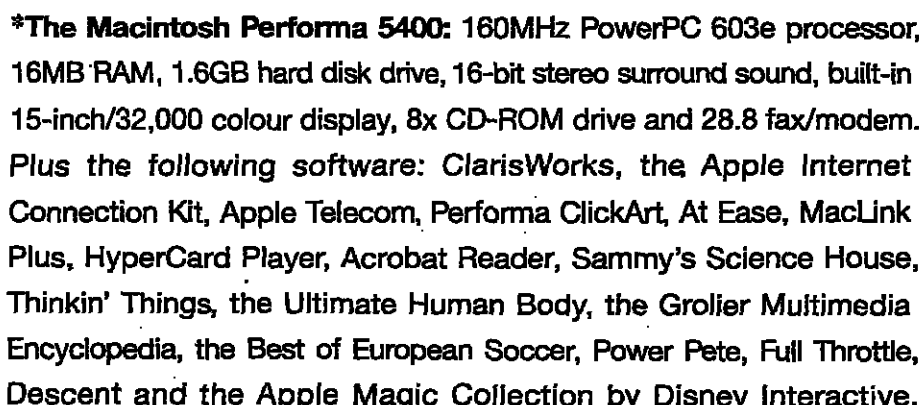
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Left and right fight the battle of May Day

Inge Karacs
Bonn

Right-wing extremists and their left-wing allies clashed in several German cities and fought running battles with police in what has now become a traditional May Day celebration.

In Berlin, about 7,000 people attended two separate "revolutionary demonstrations" — one in the East's Prenzlauer Berg and the other in Kreuzberg in the West. Police had braced themselves for violence on a scale matching the notorious riots of 10 years ago, but by last night the toll stood at fewer than 20 burnt-out cars and a few smashed shop windows. Dozens of those involved in stone-throwing incidents were detained.

Contrary to all expectations, the day's worst violence flared not in eastern Germany, but in the quiet town of Münden, near Hanover in the West.

One policeman was seriously injured there after a clash between about 300 right-wingers, led by the neo-Nazi firebrand Thorsten Heise, and a smaller group of left-wing "Autonomes". About 150 right-wingers were arrested.

The neo-Nazis were believed to belong to the NPD, the nationalist party which had tried all day to stage a mass demonstration somewhere in the east. Initially, the NPD had called for a rally in Leipzig, in front of the monument commemorating Napoleon's defeat on German soil.

This was, however, banned by the local authorities, and a force of 4,500 policemen ringed the monument yesterday to prevent a gathering.

The NPD had boasted that 70,000 people would be turning up for its demo, but by last night there were sightings of only small groups of their adherents in isolated towns. Small groups of neo-Nazis were detained in Dortmund, Aschaffenburg and Wiesbaden.

In Leipzig about 150 left-wing extremists expressed disappointment over their enemies' failure to show up by pelting police with rocks and fireworks. Leipzig was also the focal point of the national trade unions' May Day festivities, culminating in a 20,000-strong rally.

Union leaders and opposition politicians called for action to resist the policies of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's government.

Klaus Zwickel, the head of Germany's largest union, IG Metall, demanded the Chancellor's removal.

"This government is only interested in maintaining power," he said. "This government must be dissolved."

The man who would do the removing if only he had the power was also at the rally, sounding suitably hostile to Mr Kohl.

"Share values are rising, profits are exploding and yet unemployment has been rising for years," said Oskar Lafontaine, leader of the opposition Social Democrats. "We need new commercial and financial policies," he said, without elaborating.



Waiting game: Texas state troopers gather to change shifts during the stand-off between police and armed separatists at Fort Davis. On Tuesday night, at the end of day four of the stand-off, Richard McLaren, leader of the self-styled Republic of Texas, broke off all contact with negotiators. Photograph: Reuters

significant shorts

Australian takes on top UN weapons-control job

Australia's ambassador to the United Nations was named to succeed Rolf Ekeus as chairman of the UN team that inspects Iraqi weapons sites. Richard Butler will take over as chairman of the UN Special Commission on Iraq, known as Unscorm. Mr Ekeus will take a new post as Sweden's ambassador to the United States. He has been chief of the commission since it was formed in 1991 to monitor Iraq's compliance with UN disarmament demands imposed after the Gulf War. Mr Butler has considerable experience in dealing with weapons issues. He played a big role last year in saving the treaty banning nuclear-weapons test explosions by successfully pushing it through the UN General Assembly despite strong objections from India.

AP — New York

Nadir vows to return to Turkey

The fugitive Turkish Cypriot tycoon Asil Nadir vowed to return to Turkey, four years after jumping bail in Britain. He said from his home in northern Cyprus that his visit was imminent, but gave no further details. He has in the past invested in electronics companies, a hotel and the media in Turkey. He did not elaborate on the nature of any future investments there. Mr Nadir fled in May 1993 while awaiting trial on theft and false-accounting charges following the collapse of his London-based Polly Peck fruits-to-electronics empire. He still has media, banking and tourism interests in breakaway northern Cyprus.

Reuters — Ankara

'Elvira Madigan' director dies

Bo Widerberg, who directed the acclaimed film *Elvira Madigan* and was nominated three times for an Academy Award, died aged 66. He died in a hospital in Angelholm, southern Sweden, of a long illness. His most recent Oscar nomination was in 1996, for *All Things Fair*, about an intense relationship between a 15-year-old high-school student and his 37-year-old female teacher. The previous nominations were in 1964 for *Raven's End* and in 1969 for *Adalen 31*. Widerberg, noted for his sharp realism, began his artistic career as a novelist, then branched into film in 1963 with *The Baby Carriage*. He was often at odds with Ingmar Bergman.

AP — Stockholm

Buyer sought for death house

The mansion where 39 Heaven's Gate cult members killed themselves has been taken off the market while a crew strips, guts and restores it. The owner, Sam Koutchesfahani, plans to move back in before trying again to sell it, said Randall Bell, whose firm is overseeing the restoration. "Unfortunately, there's a smell throughout the entire house."

AP — Rancho Santa Fe

Wiesel heads Holocaust fund

After weeks of arguing with international Jewish leaders, the Swiss government appointed Elie Wiesel as honorary chairman of a seven-member board to run a multi-million dollar fund for Holocaust victims. The Nobel laureate and concentration-camp survivor, who is joined by two Israelis on the panel, will have the title "doyen international chairman" but no special powers, said the Foreign Minister, Flavio Cotti.

AP — Berne

Yemeni poll toll rises to 21

A Yemeni journalist was killed and four other people injured when supporters of rival candidates in Yemen's general election exchanged fire outside a polling station. The killing raised to at least 21 the number of poll-related deaths.

Reuters — Sanaa

US move on Gulf war illness

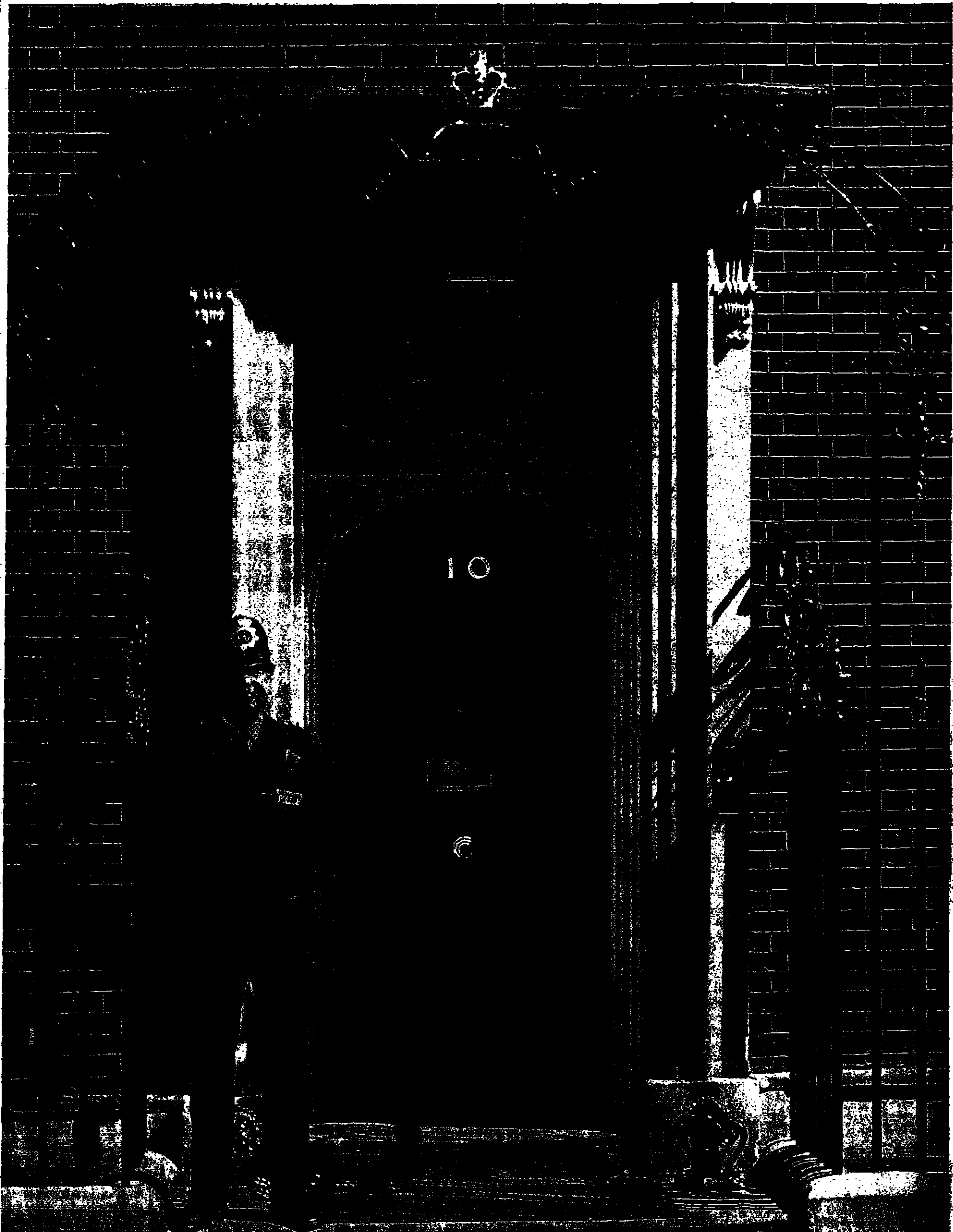
Former US Senator Warren Rudman will become a special adviser to the President on Gulf war illnesses. The appointment was decided on after a White House panel found the military was not moving fast enough to find whether American troops may have been exposed to chemical weapons during the Gulf War.

AP — New York

Elephant death acquittal

A German was acquitted of responsibility for the death of a woman killed in Zimbabwe when the mimbos he was driving hit an elephant. Despite their size, elephants are notoriously difficult to see in the dark and a judge ruled that the presence of an animal in the town centre could not be anticipated by a foreign driver.

AP — Victoria Falls



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China reaches across the sea to Taiwan

In the annals of historic sea voyages, the journey of the 2,597-tonne Chinese container ship, Sheng Da, lacks a certain element of romance. But when the vessel docked in the Taiwanese port of Kaohsiung recently, the smiling but silent mainland crew dressed in yellow outfits, its arrival marked the first direct ship crossing between China and Taiwan since 1949.

Political symbolism took priority over shipping timetables on the routing: the Sheng Da had sailed from the mainland coastal city of Xiamen that morning but hung around just outside Kaohsiung port for five hours waiting for the sun to set so that, according to naval protocol, it could enter harbour without hoisting the Taiwan flag. The unloading of cargo containers at dusk on 19 April for trans-shipment to third countries was the sort of unlikely political milestone which so characterises the volatile non-relationship between Peking and an island state which it still considers a renegade province.

It is just one year since the People's Liberation Army was lobbing missiles into the seas around Kaohsiung in the run-up to Taiwan's presidential elections. Since then, Peking has instead concentrated on winning the hearts and minds of Taiwanese businessmen, knowing

Teresa Poole in Xiamen reports on how booming business is the driving force behind sea links

that economic links may prove a more potent weapon than military hardware. Across the Strait in Taipei, President Lee Teng-hui, who last August warned that too much Taiwan investment on the mainland would jeopardise "national security", has been fighting a rear-guard action. Restrictions on mainland investment have been steadily tightened and, taking a heavy hint, Taiwan's biggest private company, Formosa Plastics, put on hold its stake in a £2 billion power station in China's south-eastern Fujian province. In Xiamen, the southern Fujian city which faces Taiwan, the evolving relationship between the mainland and Taiwan is evident in the shape of acres of sprawling factories. For decades, this was China's front-line city in the mainland's war of attrition with Taiwan, with the Taipei-controlled island of Jinmen (Quemoy) lying just offshore. When military bombardment stopped in the mid-Sixties, the noisy propa-

ganda war took over, with shells containing political leaflets. At Huisitan Fortress in Xiamen, a former restricted military zone turned seaside tourist attraction, Chinese mainlanders still pay two yuan (17p) a time to stare through a telescope at distant islands decked with what is left of the Taiwanese propaganda. But Taiwanese people are hardly a novelty on this side of the Strait: an estimated 5,000 Taiwan businessmen now live in Xiamen, managing 1,300 local Taiwan enterprises into which \$2 billion of Taiwanese money has been sunk over the past decade.

Regardless of the politics, the mainland offered much cheaper labour when Taipei's ban on private visits was dropped in 1987. At the wholly Taiwan-owned Everlead Shoe Company in Xiamen, for example, 3,000 mainland peasant girls are turning out boxloads of Cobby Cuddlers "shoes you can live in" for export to a generation of American women whose sartorial priority, it is probably fair to say, is comfort not fashion.

Much of Taiwan's low-level manufacturing has now been shifted to the mainland. The Taiwanese manager of Everlead, Sue Jane Cheng, said the company's seven Xiamen assembly lines expect to produce 8 million shoes this year, all destined for the US. Mainland labour costs were one-tenth that on Taiwan, she explained.

Taiwan businessmen in Xiamen are just as keen as the mainland government to see direct links across the Strait. The new trans-shipment cargo service between Xiamen and Kaohsiung port represents an uneasy compromise between China's demand for the "san tong" (three links) - shipping, air and postal - and President Lee's fear that economic over-dependence on mainland links is a political time-bomb.

At this stage, to Peking's chagrin, only trans-shipment is allowed which means goods crossing the Taiwan Strait cannot go in or out of Taiwan itself, but must originate from or be destined for third countries. Peking hopes this will be the thin end of the wedge in forcing full links on Taipei, with the return of Hong Kong on 30 June providing a new trump

card. At the moment the British colony provides the missing direct link for most of Taiwan's trade and investment with the mainland, and virtually all Taiwanese capital and goods to and from the mainland pass through the territory. But, with two months to go, Peking is stalling over discussions about arrangements after the handover.

"The central government will not take advantage of the return of Hong Kong to pressurise Taiwan," protests Fan Xizhou, deputy director of the Taiwan Research Institute at Xiamen University. Then he states the more ominous reality: "If the central government really wants to pressurise Taiwan, it can take advantage of the shipping between Hong Kong and Taiwan."

President Lee finds himself caught in a pincer movement between the fierce lobbying by Taiwan businessmen who want to step up mainland investment, and the threats and blandishments of Peking. Not even

last year's missile tests shook the onward march of Taiwan investors into China. In Xiamen, there was still a 20 per cent increase in Taiwan investment in 1996, according to Chinese figures. "Businessmen are always relatively cautious," said Wu Jie, at the Xiamen Foreign Investment Executive Committee. "But it is in the nature of businessmen to make profits even if they know their opportunity is rather risky either economically or politically."

Ms Cheng, at Everlead, described the feelings of Taiwanese during the missile tests: "Of course, certainly we felt slightly uncomfortable inside. But we were not terribly nervous about it, because we did not think it was for real."

中華民國政府



Hatchet man: A Taiwanese demonstrator staging a mock execution in a protest over civil liberties staged outside the Presidential office in Taipei yesterday to mark May Day

Manila warns Peking on Spratly Islands

Manila (Reuters) - The Philippines has demanded that China withdraw three ships it said had encroached on an area claimed by Manila in the Spratly Islands, and said the Chinese action could harm bilateral ties.

The presence of the vessels in the area could also set back regional cooperation, Manila said in a diplomatic note sent to the Chinese embassy on Wednesday, acting Foreign Secretary Tomas Padilla said. It violated a code of conduct requiring them not to take action that would disturb peace in the area, the note said.

"In order not to harm relations and set back the cooperation slowly developing in the region, the Philippine government therefore calls on the Chinese government to withdraw the three Chinese naval vessels from the vicinity of Kalayaan and Panata islands," Padilla told reporters.

President Fidel Ramos ordered the filing of the protest after air force planes reported sighting the three armed ships, accompanied by fishing boats, near two of the eight islands occupied by Philippine troops.

The Spratlys are a cluster of islets, reefs and shoals in the South China Sea believed to be rich in oil and gas. Peking says the area historically belongs to China. The islands are also claimed wholly or in part by Vietnam, Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.

Tension flared between the Philippines and China in 1995 when Manila accused the Chinese of building what it said appeared to be naval support structures on Mischief Reef. Peking said they were fishermen's shelters.

In addition to the three naval ships, air force planes saw several fishing boats, including a cargo-type vessel with a landing deck for helicopters, de Villa told reporters. "We are saying that they are inside our Kalayaan municipality and that there is no prior notice, and that there has been no advice that they will be there," de Villa said.



Missile flashback: A People's Liberation Army missile test last spring in Fujian province, near Taiwan

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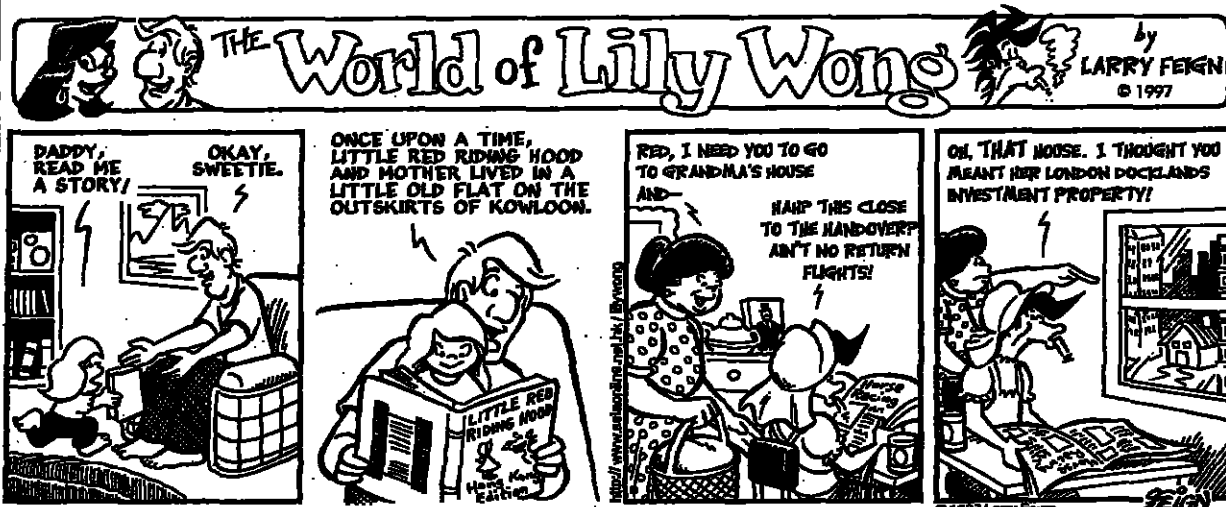
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A few rules please, in life's windfall lottery

Traditionally, elections revolve around pocket-book issues and a large part of the polling booth calculation in the past has been, "How much better off will I be?" Yesterday's contest was different, with neither main party promising immediate changes in personal taxation. Funny that, isn't it? After all, there is suddenly an awful lot of money about to be blown by because of the astonishing £20bn cash windfall that building societies are about to drop on to the doormats of the nation. More than half of it is going to be spent on homes, holidays and cars.

So, instead of a great political transfer of wealth, we are witnessing a completely commercial transfer of wealth equivalent to all income tax bills being halved for a year. As the Halifax, Woolwich and Northern Rock building societies cease to be mutual funds owned by their savers and borrowers, and become public limited companies owned by shareholders, 15 million people are about to become, on average, more than £1,000 richer.

This strange and largely unremarked enrichment illustrates how election debates can never really touch everything that drives our daily lives – in this case, some of the more arbitrary factors that underlie national and personal prosperity, and the distribution of personal wealth.

There is an awful air of neo-Thatcherism hanging over the country, a pre-

monition of the return of the yuppie and the conspicuous consumer. Then, as now, there was a strong "to him that hath" element in the accumulation of wealth, as well as an element of chance. The building society windfall is a gearing up for those who already have significant savings. Then there are the stirrings in the housing market, which bring back memories of gumping, huge profits on houses changing hands within months, champagne consumption in City bars, and all the other epiphenomena of the Lawson Boom. No wonder Kenneth Clarke never used the b-word blazoned on Conservative adverts.

The lottery of life has been less evident in the Major years, years of low inflation and a flat housing market. But now questions of the distribution of wealth, power and life-chances could come to the fore. The trickle of reports of selective rises in house prices is turning into a flood, and the injection of cash from the floating of building societies will add to the upwards pressure. Regional, local and personal variations will ensure the same combination of arbitrary gains and the enrichment of the already-rich. Only this week, there was melancholy head-shaking at the European Commission over the stark division in Britain between the South-east, one of the wealthiest regions of Europe, and many areas in the rest of the country which are among the most deprived.



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The Independent has long argued that the dominance of houses as a stock of national wealth has been a fundamental weakness of the British economy, acting as an automatic destabiliser to push any up-trend into runaway inflation. But it has also acted as an engine of inequality, dividing the nation into haves, have-nots, and have-lots.

And yet, as a nation and as individuals, we are remarkably casual about the forces which decide how rich we are. The two most important stores of wealth are our homes and pension funds, and yet the markets for them are riddled with ignorance, restrictive practices and

chance. The Conservatives tried to raise pensions as an election issue, only to be blown away by a ruthlessly effective Labour scare campaign. The housing market did not feature at all, although the last government had started to do the right thing by cutting the tax subsidy for mortgage payments.

As individuals we are penny wise and pound foolish, knowing the price of petrol or beer, and prepared to switch to the cheapest outlet, but often happy to operate in the dark when it comes to buying a house or choosing a pension, making decisions which could cost thousands. Want to switch to a cheaper mort-

gage lender? Well, there is very often a penalty clause in the contract you either did not know about, or forgot about, and all that insurance stuff is tied up in knots around it too. And the scandal of pensions mis-selling has exposed the dangers of partial liberation there.

Nevertheless, fair competition is the right approach. The housing market needs to be freed from the anti-competitive practices of conveyancing, mortgage finance and estate agencies, while pension funds need to be tightly regulated and made more accountable to their members.

Of course, it was the very forces of competition which led to the "privatisation" of building societies and mutual insurance funds, a process which has lost a valuable principle – that of mutuality – and also a valuable element of variety. It is important that there should be some forms of economic organisation other than the limited company, but the sloping playing field of the law needs to be levelled in favour of co-operative structures.

The principle of the level playing field needs to be applied more widely. It is not possible, of course, for public policy to compensate for the vicissitudes of luck in life, but the unfair advantages enjoyed by those who are already fortunate ought to be suppressed in favour of the unfortunate.

The remaining subsidy for mortgage payments should be phased out, and the

tax advantages of pensions should be tilted towards those with smaller second pensions or none at all.

The lottery of inheritance, in which the value of property plays such an enormous role, is the final key issue in the distribution of wealth. This is a sensitive issue touching on the primal human instinct to safeguard our young; but a society which wants to give real meaning to the concept of open, meritocratic opportunity has to try harder to distribute jackpots more evenly.

Anxiety gene lost, but don't panic

The scientists who found the "anxiety gene" are worried. They thought they had found a gene which predisposed people to anxiety attacks and stress. But a new study cannot find it. This is beginning to look like carelessness. They lost the "anxiety gene" two years ago, and a "novelty-seeking gene" has also gone missing. And it is not just the determinists who are under stress. The creationists have had a setback too. Lizards introduced to the Bahamas 20 years ago have already evolved, adapting to their local environment. We can evolve, even quickly, but we are not prisoners of our genes. There's a blessing, on this day of change.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CUT OUT & PLAY PIN THE HEAD ON THE TORY



TORY 'A'

A TORY HAS
JUST BEEN RETURNED
To No 10
BUT CAN YOU TELL
THE DIFFERENCE AND
PUT THE RIGHT P.M.
IN OFFICE?



TORY 'B'

CUT OUT THE 2 TORY HEADS
PLACE PIN THRU HOLE 'X'
(WHERE IT WILL DO LEAST DAMAGE)
WHILE BLINDFOLDED ATTEMPT
TO AFFIX APPROPRIATE HEAD
IN APPROPRIATE POSITION
THE WINNER?
DON'T BE SILLY

The shame of Britain's crowded jails

Sir: The shameful news that the prison population of England and Wales now exceeds 60,000 (report, 30 April) means that it has increased by nearly 50 per cent since the end of 1992, when the number of prisoners stood at 40,600. This country now has 116 prisoners for every 100,000 people in the general population, compared with 89 in France, 84 in Germany, 67 in Holland and 65 in Sweden. In the whole of Western Europe only Spain and Portugal jail proportionately more people than we do.

The pressure of numbers is most acute in the Victorian-built city centre prisons, which always bear the brunt of overcrowding. Sixteen such prisons are now more than 30 per cent overcrowded. Ten jails are overcrowded by more than 50 per cent, five by over 70 per cent, three by over 80 per cent, and one by over 90 per cent. More than 10,000 prisoners are now being held two to a cell designed for one person.

The record prison population is the result of an increasingly crude penal policy which has emphasised toughness at the expense of effectiveness and justice. As a result, money which should be devoted to improving regimes is being wasted on desperate attempts to expand the prison system by such makeshift methods as prison ships and converted holiday camps.

Any new government must reverse this punitive trend if it is to give prisons a real chance of rehabilitating offenders, rather than turning out embittered prisoners who are more likely to reoffend.

PAUL CAVADINO
Chair, Penal Affairs Consortium
London SW9

Abuse flourishes in silence

Sir: Jo Brand (19 April) is not alone in regretting her inability to "whistleblow" when faced with abuse within a residential home for adults with learning disabilities. Here at Respond we provide therapy and counselling to a growing number of people who have been sexually abused in just such circumstances of silence and fear. The ability to whistleblow is reduced when faced with a pervasive culture of denial and disbelief that this level of exploitation can happen to those who rely on us for care and support.

Research from the University of Kent in 1992 concluded that the average annual number of people with learning disabilities being sexually abused is almost 1,000. This staggering figure makes more sense when one considers the extreme vulnerability of this section of society to physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Many of the men and women we work with have been abused for years before their voices were finally heard. Sometimes it takes the bravery of a worker to bring the trauma to light. Sometimes it takes the desperate actions of the victim themselves.

Our legal system places victims of sexual abuse who have learning disabilities at a crucial disadvantage, with the majority of cases failing to reach court. Our work at Respond is concerned primarily with providing therapeutic justice to those whose experience of sexual

abuse has been buried deep inside them.

Our work will become easier if, like Jo Brand, more people have the courage to bring the issue into the public arena. It combines many of society's taboos – sex, disability and abuse – and is thus rarely discussed, a situation that leaves victims of abuse further traumatised by our failure to believe.

ALAN CORBETT
Acting Clinical Director
Respond
London, NW1

Fruity veg for healthy children

Sir: We are writing to comment on the new "wacky veg" that your reporter tried out on children in year Four at our school ("Chocolate flavoured veg acts as carrot for healthy eating", 22 April).

We both think that it is a totally absurd idea. One reason to disapprove of the idea of "flavoured vegetables" is that putting unhealthy flavouring into healthy food will not encourage children to eat healthy food but to eat the unhealthy foods that have those flavours. Another reason is that children who like real vegetables will start eating fake vegetables and not want to go back to the real thing.

Here is a suggestion: the vegetables could be flavoured with fruit or other healthy foods which children like.
EMILY STOKES-ROE
NIAMH BRENNAN-BERNATT
(Year Six)
Gillespie School
London N4

Boar image on Beowulf's helmet

Sir: The account by your archaeology correspondent, "Ancient Saxon tomb yields royal treasures" (23 April) is misleading in the claim that a boar motif on the helmet indicates that this was a royal grave of an Anglo-Saxon king. It is a remarkable discovery and the artefacts indicate that the grave was of a high status, but not conclusively royal. Such helmets were familiar to the Beowulf poet, for he mentions them five times. Beowulf's helmet is "beset with swine" (1.1453), "set around with boar images", and in another instance, "sworn swate fish swin offer helme" (1.1286), "the sword stained with gore the swine above the helmet", which brings to mind the free-standing boar on the Benty Grange helmet (Sheffield Museum), the closest parallel to the Northamptonshire find. In Swedish finds from the sixth and seventh centuries, warriors wearing boar-crested helmets appear on a helmet plate from Vendel Gr 1, and on discs for creating stamped bronze helmet foils from Jorslanda, Öland.

There is evidence that the boar-crested helmet is not confined to the Germanic world of the migration period. It makes its appearance much earlier on two warriors depicted in chased silver from the inside of the Gundestrup cauldron. Denmark, which is Celtic work of the first or second century BC.
Dr GEORGE SPEAKE
Banbury, Oxfordshire

Nuclear waste safe on roads

Sir: Your reporter is wrong in asserting that there was a leakage of radioactive waste from a container en route from Trawsfynydd power station ("Inquiry into radioactivity scare", 23 April). There was no accident and the steel box was not damaged. What Magnox Electric is investigating is how surface readings on the container were found on arrival to be above the permitted limit, though still far too low to cause anyone any harm.

Professor George Hasley (Letters, 28 April) asks why Magnox Electric uses road transport. The answer is that it is safe, reliable and economic. Low-level waste – typically redundant plant, lightly contaminated protective clothing and cleaning materials as well as dust and debris trapped by clean-up systems – is transported in robust steel containers approved by the regulator for road transport. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Magnox Electric's radioactive material movements do indeed travel by rail.

There are now around half-a-million package movements of radioactive material a year involving hospitals, universities, and manufacturing companies as well as the nuclear industry and they are all governed by stringent safety measures. Magnox Electric has been transporting radioactive materials for 35 years, and we have

not had a single accident resulting in a release of radioactive material.

A TELLIS
Station Manager
Magnox
Trawsfynydd Power Station
Trawsfynydd, Gwynedd

Blame shaving

Sir: Could it be that women have been spared the cumulative effect of years of residual shaving foam, or the buzzing of electric razors near the ears, which has reduced the sensitivity to noise of the male of the species?

Can any of your readers suggest who might be sued if this turns out to be the cause of distress for Geraldine O'Farrell (letter, 26 April) and Mair Gaunt (letter, 26 April)?
CHRIS PERRY
Henford

Young masters

Sir: In his piece on Sir Roy Strong's diaries (29 April) Jonathan Glancy describes Sir Roy as the youngest ever director of a national collection, having been appointed to the National Portrait Gallery at the age of 31.

In June 1933 when Kenneth Clark, later Lord Clark, received a telegram from Ramsay MacDonald offering him the directorship of the National Gallery, he was "still under thirty".
JANE BARRY
Kingston Blount, Oxford

Eurostar should fit platforms

Sir: If I understand correctly, Eurostar is unable to run services north of Euston as originally planned because its trains damage overhead lines (report, 28 April).

Eurostar also had the problem of its trains being bigger than normal British trains and so various platforms were shaved – at public expense – to fit them. It now sounds as though the public (whether fare-paying or not) have to meet the cost of adaptations to overhead lines and signalling on every major route where Eurostar wishes to run.

Surely when Eurostar bought the trains, it would have been simple enough to specify that the trains should run in Britain. Changing everything else to suit the trains rather than changing the trains to suit existing infrastructure sounds a bit like putting the private cart before the public horse.
DAVID H McLEAN
London N4

Sir: We used to have a train from Birmingham New Street which was run to connect with the Eurostar at Waterloo. Each morning it would stand practically empty while the "normal" Intercity to Euston filled up to overflowing with grumpy passengers.

Many people travelling to south London expressed interest in using the Waterloo train, but since only Eurostar travellers were allowed on, the service quietly died. Why not reinstate it as an open service? It would not then matter if it did have the wrong kind of pantograph.
BIRMINGHAM

Cyclist driven to despair

Sir: I am concerned about the behaviour of motorists towards cyclists. I am a 23-year-old Swiss girl who has been living in Reading for six months.

Previously I had been living in Italy for a long time. Although the motorists were temperamental, they still respected the cyclists. In England the bicycle culture is very different from Italy and Switzerland. Here, every day I nearly get hit by a careless driver who doesn't take any notice of me on my bicycle.

A friend of mine recently got knocked down by a car whose driver wasn't paying any attention. I am very upset and can't put up with this situation any more. In my country cycling is much safer because motorists are more considerate and there are far more cycle lanes.
M FIEDLER
Reading, Berkshire

Sir: Jeremy Garson (letter, 28 April) perpetuates the myth, common among motorists, that illegal parking is not a crime. It is a crime whether the car is parked on a yellow line for one second or one hour.

This myth is perpetuated by the lack of enforcement of the law and the minimal fines. In many cities cars can be seen parked nose-to-tail on double lines and blocking bus stops and bus lanes with no parking tickets in sight.

This is a case for zero tolerance. Any vehicle parked illegally at any time deserves a ticket and a fine many times the current level, together with endorsement of the driver's licence. Then we might free the streets for public transport and other legitimate road users.
CHRISTOPHER FREEL
Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire

Sir: British traffic wardens are not always as inhuman as Jeremy Garson makes out (letter, 28 April). Were he a parent with a four-wheel drive complete with bull bars, he could park his vehicle for 20 minutes or more in this part of Wandsworth while he disappeared some distance up the road to collect his child from his exclusive private preparatory school without fear of the wardens ever being in the vicinity.

Admittedly at any other time they would behave as he maintains and issue a ticket within minutes even if he appeared on the scene before they had finished doing so.
MICHAEL CLARKE
London SW15

Smug to shun TV

Sir: It is ironic that I read about the planned White Dot campaign, to turn television off for a week and make us all better people (report, 26 April), while visiting Paris for a conference on young people and the media.

We suffered the trials of such a campaign in 1992 (the Great New Zealand Television Turn-Off Week) and it didn't do anything at all to change television. All it did was increase the smugness of those participating. Turning off television does nothing; teaching about it, in a critical sense, in schools and universities does much more.

I hope British viewers have the sense to ignore this intrusion into their lives.
GEOFF LEALAND
Senior Lecturer in Film and Television Studies
University of Waikato
New Zealand

essay

18 years of Tory rule? Sorry, I missed it

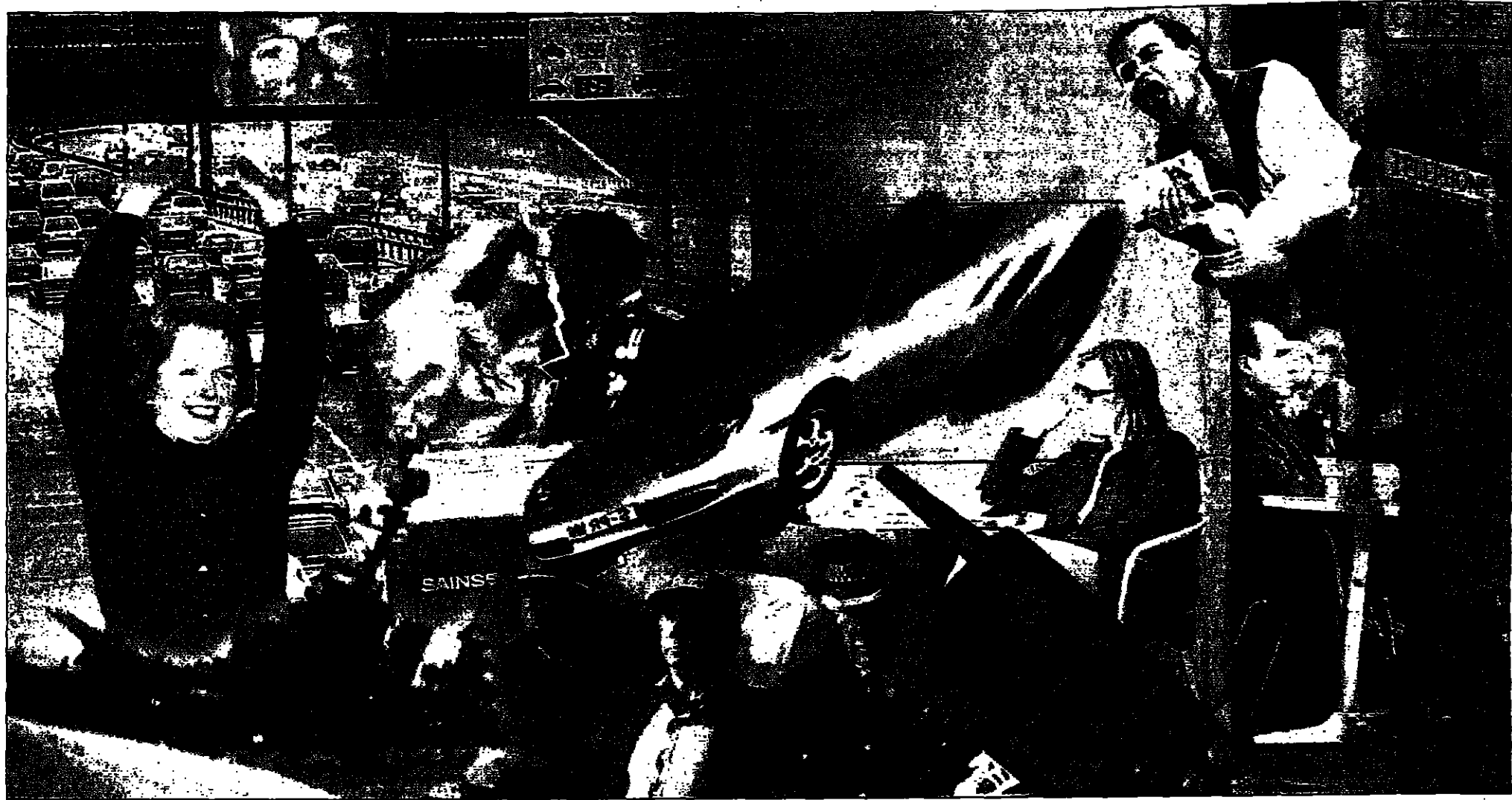
Half the population has no memory of a Labour Britain. Rupert Cornwell, however, never experienced the upheavals of the Conservative era. Now he's back in a land that has been transformed since he left in 1978

Barring the very end of the endgame, I missed it all: every queenly "we" from the Lady herself, every purse-lipped retreat by her successor, the greed of the Roaring Eighties and the sourness of the Nineties, privatisation and the vanquishing of the unions, the dysfunction of the Royal Family and the collapse of English cricket – in short the lot. Everything, all 18 years of Tory rule. Labour it was when I left for Italy in October 1978, having been a political correspondent for the *Financial Times*. Now, four consecutive foreign postings and one newspaper later, I am back. And Labour it will surely be again when the cock crows at dawn today.

Half the population, it is said, have no memory of a Labour Britain. Having been abroad throughout the Heath years too, I have no memory of a Conservative one. Apart from their official visits to countries where I lived, Margaret Thatcher and John Major are the Prime Ministers who never were. My abiding image of the Commons is a scowling James Callaghan stalking the committee corridor followed by a posse of nervous retainers. As far as I am concerned, he is being succeeded by the sweet-smiling but evidently super-disciplined Tony Blair. There is, alas, one problem: in between, Britain and British politics have been transformed. The returning time traveller seeks to regain his bearings, yearning for the familiar. It ain't easy.

Old Labour, New Labour – Old Britain, New Britain. This is a richer place, but also rougher, tougher, coarser and unkindler. The reserve and pseudo-gentleness that still flourished in the late Seventies have gone. For proof, just look at my business, where even the "quality press" has turned into brassy propaganda sheets, and articles about sex adorn every other page. Who said the British are prudish? Divisions of class are giving way to no less stark divisions of wealth. Clearly, however, there is no desire for a return to pre-Thatcher: rather for a nudge back towards the centre and a more caring capitalism, where somebody remembers the poor, the infirm and the less gifted.

The quest for pre-Thatcher political faces is equally arduous. I found three on the BBC TV panel assembled by Robin Day each morning. But they were



not active politicians but listed national monuments: Norman Tebbit, the semi-housetrained polecat turned benign saloon-bar sage; an ever jowlier Roy Hattersley for Labour's corner, and sage Roy Jenkins for the Liberal Democrats – flirting with self-parody but retaining enough authority to make one wonder what might have been, had he succeeded Harold Wilson in 1976.

Others I remember from the late Seventies are very much in business. A then eager beaver from Tory Central Office research department called Michael Portillo now needs no introduction. Nor does William Hague, star-turn for the Thatcher-*jugend* at the Tory conference of 1977, who I discover on my return has been installed by the bookies as co-favourite with Portillo to become the next party leader. But their hands will not be on the levers of power in the new parliament. As for today's party leaders, they weren't even MPs when I last prowled Westminster. John Major was still a rising executive at the Standard Chartered Bank, Tony Blair was in London law chambers as a labour lawyer, while Paddy Ashdown was working for Westland helicopters in Yeovil.

Of the Blairite high command, only Robin Cook was an MP, remembered by me as an ornery left-wing opponent of devolution. Now he is poised to star in

a Labour government that may genuinely devolve. But that is the finest of the adjustments to be made.

In the Seventies Britain I left, Cabinet meetings mattered less for the governance of the country than those infamous beer and sandwich sessions at Downing Street when we hung on every utterance of Messrs Murray, Jones and Scanlon. Some say the unions are plotting an early test of Blair, but to my shame I cannot even name today's general secretary of the TUC. Back then, the miners and the dockers were the mightiest constituencies in the land, the latter overweening enough to demand the Dock Labour Regulation Bill, which gave them a cargo-handling monopoly within five miles of a dockyard. Thanks to the defection of two moderate Labour MPs, the bill would be defeated, forcing the minority Callaghan government into the Lib-Lab pact. Looking back, what is amazing is not that the measure failed, but that it was ever put forward at all.

An where oh where is the National Executive Committee? Back then each meeting of the NEC was a bloodbath, a monthly ritual of left-wing rebellion only quashed by a threat by Callaghan to resign. Today Blair apparently controls all but two seats on the executive. As for the miners, the number of pits still open, I am told, has dropped from many hundreds to 29. In both Parliament and the country, the hard left is vanquished. These days, if anyone practices "entryism", it is not the militant Trotskyites who used to stage constituency committee ambushes on over-moderate sitting MPs, but the Blairites bent on eradicating the last of what Mikhail Gorbachev called "old thinking". At Westminster the once fearsome Tribune group has become a flock of lambs, and in the process rendered the now disbanded Manifesto group superfluous.

Or take Europe. At Westminster the issue has always generated civil war, but the combatants are reversed. In those

days Labour's pro- and anti-marketisers feuded over issues like proportional voting for the Strasbourg parliament, and most of them saw Europe as citadel of the claret-sipping boss class, and Roy Jenkins as the ultimate betrayer of socialism and national sovereignty. Their successors have long concluded that Brussels is a more dependable protector of a British working man's rights than home-grown Conservatives preaching unfettered market economics.

But this transformation – and every other by-product of the Thatcher revolution – I only observed from afar. Already in Rome when she was elected, I followed the Falklands conflict from a deeply ambivalent Italy. By the time she routed the miners in 1984-85, I had moved on to Bonn. From Moscow I watched the stunning Kremlin coup in London which overthrew her. By the time John Major won election in his own right, I was in Washington, safely removed from sterling's humiliating ejection from the ERM in September 1992 and the *fin de régime* air which settled upon the Conservatives thereafter.

I have only seen the final death throes of Tory government – not so much the thrashing of a mighty tail as the few faint twitches of an already despatched corpse. But for one returning from the US, New Labour is old news. The similarities of Blair vs Major 1997 and Clinton vs Dole 1996 are overwhelming – the shift of the entire political spectrum in both countries to the right, the fixation on the leaders to the exclusion of all else, the shameless stealing of an opponents' best issues, the deliberate lack of specifics, and the retreat into thunderous banality whenever awkward detail presses. Certainly, Blair appears to function on a higher plane of personal morality than the irredeemably tacky Clinton. But who are the greater soundbites: American presidential candidates with their mantra of "The Greatest Nation on Earth" or their counterparts here, promising to be "British patriots" who will take no nonsense from the continentals (Blair,

Major, Ashdown, *passim*)? I even heard one of them talk about "restoring the British Dream". Next time around, it will be every speech ending with "God Bless the United Kingdom".

Already, though, and undeniably, the Almighty is looking more kindly on his British subjects than two decades ago. My two years as a lobby correspondent for the *Financial Times* must have been the nadir of post-war Britain, symbolised by Denis Healey's U-turn on the road to London airport and the subsequent stand-by loan from the International Monetary Fund, which came close to splitting the cabinet. Labour then was as detested as the Conservatives now: my very first assignment was Labour's stunning by-election defeat in its citadel of Workington – a punishment all too familiar of late to Major's Conservatives.

But the most fitting emblem of the age was the Thorpe affair, a Krakatoa of a scandal featuring a dead dog, a murder plot, and the disgrace of the leader of England's oldest political party. Above all, though, it was a metaphor for the state of the country, of humbug exposed, reputations destroyed and illusions stripped away. Compared to Thorpe, the sleaze erup-tions of the Major years, it seems to me, reflect more an ever-growing media obsession with sex and money than any abrupt collapse of political morality.

Musing last month on the state of pre-electoral Britain, *Die Zeit* lamented the passing of old imperial graces and likened contemporary Britain to a "Switzerland in the North Sea": selfish, smug and stubborn. But that is surely preferable to being an offshore version of the Ottoman Empire, circa 1900, which Britain was passably imitating when I left after Callaghan fumbled an early election in October 1978.

Two decades and four lost elections later, both the Labour Party he leads and the country Blair inherits are utterly different. His England is far more efficient, businesslike and productive than

From miners to Major, Lady Di to Loadsamoney: changes in the political and cultural landscape

the one I remember – though I still can't believe we have turned from sick man of Europe into the leader of the new capitalism. Unarguably, the place is simultaneously both more American and more European: the former visible not only in the political process but in the language, the fabric of daily life and culture – for worse and for better. If British television increasingly resembles the vapid American networks, what miracle has overtaken our telephone system? Services such as directory enquiries used to be a refined form of water torture. Now they yield nothing to their American equivalents.

As for Europe, who can stop its encroachment? Certainly, and deliciously, not Thatcher's children desperate to defend their island fortress. Our politicians may mock the Continent, but when Battersea is full of French and Italian restaurants and they sing "La Marseillaise" at Old Trafford, you realise the limits of little England. In this interdependent world national rivalries may be played out on the sports field, but not so fiercely as to prevent Eric Cantona becoming an honorary Englishman. That would never have happened in Callaghan's day.

At which point a thought impinges. Maybe Britain, ever pulled in opposite directions across the Channel and the Atlantic, is for once getting the best of both worlds. Thus does London become what *Nesweek* and the like extol as the coolest city on the planet, a distinction whose main effect, to my silent fury, is to add a few more thousand pounds to the cost of the house I must buy. And truly there is a bit of a fizz in the air, so different from Callaghan's resigned and sullen land, waiting for its chance to throw the rascals out. They did, and this week sees the passing of a Tory era. For me, though, it is the belated funeral of a vanished Labour England.

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The jokes that time forgot

I was saying the other day that *The Guardian* was once known as the home of misprints, but that as it had shaken off that reputation, we needed a new one. I suggested the *Radio Times* as a source of misprints and asked for offerings, which of course has led to many kind readers sending me misprints from *The Independent*, so I'll hold fire on that one for a while...

But the idea of Aunt Sallys generally is an interesting one, the way in which something can be exceedingly funny to everyone one year and be forgotten the next. One year we think it is hilarious to say "Norway – nul points", and the next we wonder why we ever laughed. Nothing ever stays funny (except perhaps sex, death and other people's misfortunes). Our favourite targets fall out of fashion and are forgotten.

There was a time, not so long ago, when you could get an instant laugh by invoking the name of Group 4. Not any more. We still remember, sort of, that Group 4 became accident-prone for a while and kept losing things and people it

was guarding, but it's a distant memory now and too faint to raise a laugh. Historians will have to tell us why we laughed.

Similarly, I can remember my father laughing at comedians on the radio making fun of the groundnut scheme, and Beveridge, and rationing, and nylon stockings. It must be a good many years since anyone got a laugh out of the groundnut scheme, yet the equivalent of the groundnut scheme is always turning up.

In the last week or two, Channel 5 has become an instant laugh object. I can't get Channel 5 and I don't want to, but even I know enough about it to register jokes about it. (Mark you, I can also remember a time when Channel 4 was good for instant laughs, as a symbol of all that was pretentious and avant-garde and unwatchable.)

I have heard comedians in the last few weeks get laughs out of the Spice Girls (I'll scream if I hear the one about Old Spice Girls again) and I have heard the jokes about Dudley Moore coming back to do pantomime in



Miles Kingston

Southampton (I'll scream if I hear the one about "Your movie career! It's behind you!" again) but I wager that unless someone writes down the reasons behind these passing outbreaks of jokes, we may be baffled in 10 years' time as to why anyone should have thought they were funny.

Some targets do last a long time. Quentin Crisp records that when he first arrived in London people were still whispering stories about Oscar Wilde. Well, I can beat that. When I first went to

school, people were still making Oscar Wilde jokes.

(I can even remember one. Here it is. Oscar Wilde comes out of prison and checks into a hotel, where he is seen going to his room with one of the hotel's page boys. He is stopped by the hotel manager, who says: "Oh, Mr Wilde – I thought you were going to turn over a new leaf!" "So I am," says Wilde. "but I think I'll just get to the bottom of this page first..." At the age of 13, when I had never heard of Oscar Wilde and wasn't aware of homosexuality, this joke took some explaining.)

Oscar Wilde had been a butt of jokes in his lifetime, of course, whether at the hands of Gilbert and Sullivan, or *Punch*, or the music hall, but we are told that jokes about the Royal Family are something new, and that respect has always precluded them being made an Aunt Sally. This may be true in this country, but not elsewhere.

Edward VII, when Prince of Wales, was regarded abroad not as a future monarch but as a lecherous old brute. When he went to Paris, his female companion

was not always the woman to whom he was married, and on one of these occasions some French humorist inserted in the French papers an advertisement saying: "Princess Alexandra wishes it to be known that she is the rightful Princess of Wales, and that anyone else trading under that name or carrying out her functions with the Prince of Wales is an impostor and should be treated as such."

One cannot imagine anyone in Victorian England making such a joke. Nowadays people do joke about the Prince of Wales, but in a very different way, and one day we will have to have the jokes about him talking to the flowers explained as well, just as young people today have no idea why we once laughed at the very mention of George Brown being drunk, or the Red Dean, or Sabrina, or the unfinished Sydney Opera House, or Red-Robbo, or parking meters, or Mrs Mills, or Andrew Lloyd Webber, or Centre Point, or Brendan Behan, or the Sinclair C-5...

Did someone say, or John Major?

Why the military is still no place for a woman

Delmar Simpson, a 32-year-old drill sergeant at the Aberdeen training centre in Maryland, could well be remembered as the man who reversed US thinking on mixed training in the army. Convicted by a court martial this week on 18 counts of rape – all the victims were female trainees in his charge – he will plead next Monday against a likely sentence of life imprisonment.

If Simpson were just one bad egg in an otherwise professional and disciplined army training system, his case could be dismissed as a regrettable exception. Evidence that emerged during Simpson's investigation and trial, however, suggests something different. He is only the first of at least a dozen Aberdeen drill sergeants facing sexual misconduct charges. And while one senior officer went on record as saying that discipline at Aberdeen was "the worst" he had seen, more than 300 army sex investigations are in progress, involving army training bases across the US.

Responses to the case have been predictably split. To opponents of equal opportunities for women in the armed forces, the Delmar Simpson case seems only to confirm the view that mixing the sexes in the military is asking for trouble. Temptation is put in everyone's way, discipline is put at risk. For supporters of women in the forces, the case only confirms their view that the prevailing atmosphere in the army is hostile to women. They welcomed the trial, and the verdict, as a sign that women recruits' allegations about sexual harassment, and worse, are at last being taken seriously, but they noted that the number of cases still outstanding shows how far there is to go.

In between these straightforward responses, however, lies a host of complexities that reveal what a tangled web the US has woven in mixing army training. The official position is clear. Women recruits can train alongside men and, following a Congress decision of 1988, may take combat roles. However, "fraternisation" across ranks – often a euphemism for sexual relations – is an offence; so is adultery. Punishment ranges from a reprimand and counselling, through dismissal and forfeiture of pension, to court martial and prison.

This is the theory. But if only a fraction of the allegations about what went on at the Aberdeen training centre are true – "Conduct sexual sex was rampant at army base," said a *Washington Post* headline – the clear disciplinary line was far from being universal practice. The three-month army training course at Aberdeen is said to have been regarded by many recruits, men and women alike, as one long party. Officers speak of finding liquor bottles and used condoms littering dormitory floors when they came on duty each morning. The women, it is said, enjoyed being outnumbered by men. The officers and instructors, who were predominantly male, found them-

selves in the paradoxical situation of having almost instant access to young women who were under orders to "obey".

Obedience, though, takes many forms. Evidence given by a dozen or so women trainees to the Aberdeen court martial indicated that some "obeyed" out of fear, others out of ambition. Some admitted to willing compliance. Five who withdrew rape allegations on the eve of the trial said they had "agreed" to sex with Simpson, but had been pressured by investigators to say they had been raped. Army rules give women an infinitely greater incentive to claim rape than to admit to "consensual" sex. The latter is an offence that could end their career; the former, which absolves them of responsibility, ruins only the man's career while leaving their own intact.

While there is no suggestion from the reported evidence that Simpson's trial was anything but fair, it is possible to argue that the court martial jury, consisting of five men (three white, two black) and one woman (white), might have felt under pressure, given the climate of US opinion, not to run scared of a rape conviction. It also seems that the armed forces are applying the rules on sexual relations with a new rigour in an attempt to avoid embarrassing charges of cover-ups (as in the Tailhook sexual harassment incident six years ago, when female navy recruits were made to run a gauntlet of lewd and drunken officers). This throws up hard cases and leaves the forces treading a very fine line between enforcing military discipline for the general good and dictating personal morality for its own sake.

An egregious example is that of Kelly Flinn, at 26 the only woman pilot of a B52 bomber. After expensive training, which she completed as top of her class, she is now suspended from duty, awaiting court martial next month for adultery. The charge relates to an affair with a civilian soccer coach who was in the process of divorcing his wife. Because her lover was married, the affair was regarded as a breach of military discipline.

Until recently, it is said, the preferred attitude to affairs in the military was similar to the official attitude towards homosexuals: "Don't ask. Don't tell." That no longer seems to be true. The US armed forces now seem to have lurching to the opposite attitude of "ask all. Tell all," which tries to enforce discipline by probing the finer reaches of a soldier's private life.

It is easy to say that officers should be trained to take a common-sense approach and act only where military discipline and the effectiveness of the fighting force is threatened. But that, however, poses a fundamental question which seems to have been overlooked in the rush to make the armed forces an "equal opportunities employer": can the army be a modern profession without embodying a male way of life?



Mary Dejevsky

In the rush to declare the US army an 'equal opportunity' employer, its very nature may have been overlooked

Will men surrender to the Fluffragettes?

by Suzanne Moore

Today may be a good day to talk about women and power, as more women enter Parliament than ever before.

But the important political question that must be addressed is where they stand on the Fluffy issue.

The Fluffy Manifesto, "the most significant new movement for women since Germaine Greer wrote *The Female Eunuch*", was launched last week in the *Daily Mail* by Cherri Gilham. Already prominent Fluffragettes are rushing to sign themselves up. The fluffragettes are proud to come out as giggling, pouting and cooing their way to emancipation. They must never contradict men or be aggressive. No shrieking is allowed. Eyelashes must be fluttered at all times, and the F-word, feminism, is strictly verboten.

Fluffy ladies know that real fluffiness is almost spiritual. It comes from the inside. You cannot fake it, though you may have to spend a fortune producing the femininity that is required to fool men that you are not a threat to them in any way.

I don't mind female impersonators, myself; after all, I've spent years in drag, but I draw the line at being told to think kindly of men. I must confess, also, that the central thrust of this movement – if thrust is not too virile a word – is one that I don't fully understand. The idea is apparently to put the "femininity back in to feminism", as though there has been some femininity deficit that now has to be made up for.

Has feminism drained the nation's womanhood of its most precious attributes – its lipstick, its hair spray, its essential "velvetiness"? Surely not. If that were the case, we could no longer tell men and women apart, and then God knows how we could continue to systematically discriminate against the fairer sex.

That, of course, is the great fear about feminism; that a movement designed to stop discrimination on the grounds of sexual difference will in the end do away with sexual difference itself. Everyone will be just the same, and that would not be fun.

Actually, the opposite is true – we are obsessed with sexual difference. Books are sold on the sole basis that they explain the difference between the sexes, or that they tell each gender how to communicate with the other. We worry that girls are doing better than boys, that men have lost the traditional crutches of their identity, that women are becoming more violent. Yet we still carry on carrying on with each other, making the best of a bad lot.

Many analysts, whether male or female, are in rough agreement about one thing. The problems we are facing are not to do with the fact that women are becoming like men, or even that they are not womanly enough. The problem is that men are too much like



Cherri Gilham, founder of the Fluffy Club and former TV glamour girl

They will pout their way to power. Feminism is the forbidden F-word

men and must learn to be a little less so if any progress is to be made.

Still, enough of masculinity in crisis. We don't want to upset the poor bugger. Instead, we must assume power without them even knowing, so that they don't feel a thing.

As if the Fluffy Manifesto wasn't enough, one can always be a Princessa. *The Princessa*, written by Harriet Rubin (published by Bloomsbury in May), is

billed as "Machiavelli for women". Princessas know that it's OK to cry in the office, flirt with policemen, react emotionally, and wear brightly coloured clothes. Princessas are slightly fluffy but the thing about a princessa is that she knows that it's war out there. Conflict, which women are taught to avoid, is always a form of contact both requiring power and building power. Machiavelli's advice to the Prince didn't, as I

recall, involve fashion tips, but I suppose you can't have everything.

The Princessa is a glorified self-help book. It is full of old-fashioned advice which basically amounts to telling women to use their feminine wiles. After a lot of sub-Buddhist babble and a trawl through some tough cookies, from Joan of Arc to Jacqueline Onassis, it boils down to this: a princessa's weapons are clothes, voice, hair, jewellery, posture, make-up and tears.

Yes, that's right, tears are always useful. If only Joan of Arc had some tear-proof mascara, things might have been very different.

The trouble is, you see, so many of us suffer from "power anorexia". We deliberately starve ourselves of power when presumably we could be stuffing it down our throats.

Rubin and her fellow fluffies neatly sidestep the question of what power might actually be, though Rubin helpfully informs us that men crave disempowerment. Hell, why bring the real world into this? All that deathly dull stuff about equal pay, equal representation, equal rights is not the way to go. We must not play by their rules, but make our own. This highly individualised notion of power – power as a personal and psychological attribute – ignores systems, structures, institutions. It makes power something that a wily woman can achieve not by connecting with other women, but by emphasising her separateness from them, à la Margaret Thatcher.

It is true enough to say that feminism has a problem with power and has retreated from adequately addressing what it means. Many women, having bought the idea that power means having what men have now, wonder if it is worth it. Is the double shift of work and domestic labour, which means a 14-hour day, any sort of power for anyone? The result is a flight into New Age mysticism, with its accent on female spiritual power and its lack of engagement with material culture.

The third way, and the one currently officially sanctioned, are tired re-runs of female sexual power. Here the Spice Girls and Naomi Wolf come together in some multiple orgasmic universe where with enough zig-a-zig aching they can get in touch with their own inner sluts and make lots of dosh in the process.

Female aggression is no threat to anyone if it is limited to sexual aggression and then marketed as utilisation. So it's 1997, and we have to choose between the fluffies, the princessas, the Spices and self-obsessed slut redeemers. Men must be quaking in their boots at the very prospect of having to take their pick from this monstrous regiment. I'm sure.

Perhaps I should cash in my chips and write a self-help book myself. I could call it *Redefining Winning: A Handbook for Happy Slappers*. Born Losers might be a better title, but I wouldn't want to sound bitter and twisted, because let's face it, men just don't find that sort of thing very attractive.

How America bombed in Iraq

Patrick Cockburn examines the disastrous track record of the man who would run the CIA

When an intelligence agency has a sudden fit of honesty, wrings its hands and publicly admits to doing wrong, outside observers usually count their fingers and check their wallets. Some did so last month when America's Central Intelligence Agency admitted failure at a rare press conference at its headquarters in Langley, Virginia. It said it had known about an Iraqi nerve gas depot in 1991, but had still allowed the US army to blow it up, possibly endangering American troops.

"This is the chapter that lays out some not-so-pretty news," said Robert Walpole, the CIA's expert on Gulf war disease. "I'll give that apology – we should have given out that information sooner."

With a reputation for almost excessive probity thus established, George J Tenet, the acting director of the CIA, goes before the Senate Intelligence Committee next week with every expectation that he will be confirmed in the post. There is no sign that the committee, of which Mr Tenet was staff director for four years, will ask to open other, more embarrassing chapters in the history of the CIA's involvement in Iraq.

If they did so, they might like to ask how it was that the CIA's network in northern Iraq, one of its largest operations, was liquidated after a series of blunders in which some 300 Iraqis died. When Iraq captured the Kurdish capital of Arbil last August, the CIA was just as surprised as it was in 1990 when Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader, invaded Kuwait. Within hours of the attack, Iraqi execution squads massacred 120 Iraqis working for the CIA-backed Iraqi National Congress. It was the last chapter in a disastrous attempt by the CIA to overthrow Saddam.

The CIA had long supported some factions of the Iraqi opposition, though without much enthusiasm. Between 1992 and 1995, the money spent on its covert operations against Baghdad dropped from \$40m to \$15m. But in the summer of 1995, John Deutch became CIA director, with George Tenet as his deputy. American esteem for the agency had fallen after the arrest of a Russian spy, almost immediately an opportunity to restore the agency's reputation beckoned in Iraq.

In August 1995, Lt Gen Hussein Kamel, Saddam's son-in-law, fled to Jordan. He said that



George J Tenet is set to become director of the CIA despite the debacle of its attempts to undermine Saddam, pictured (right) at his recent birthday celebrations



he had escaped because he feared that Uday, Saddam's eldest son, would kill him. The core of the Iraqi regime seemed to be fragmenting, and for the first time in years the Iraqi leader looked vulnerable.

The instrument chosen by the CIA to foment a coup in Baghdad tells a great deal about American policy towards Iraq. It was the Iraqi National Accord (INA), one of the most conservative of the opposition organisations. Led by Dr Iyad Mohammed Alawi, a physician from Baghdad who had fled to London in 1971, it recruited army officers, intelligence officials and members of the ruling Ba'ath party. It wanted to replace Saddam with a minimum of disruption. Brigadier Adnan Mohammed al-Nuri, one of the INA's military leaders, resigned from the organisation last year, complaining of its rejection of radical change. He said: "I do not accept exchanging one Saddam for another."

This was exactly what the CIA wanted to do. It is not exactly, as ordinary Iraqis believe, that

the US wants Saddam to stay in power. But it is determined that his fall should not benefit Iran, which supports Iraq's Shia Muslims, a majority of the population. In 1991, President George Bush allowed the Iraqi government to use helicopter gunships against Shia rebels.

The CIA was already channelling money to the INA. And to show its long reach, the INA was exploding bombs in Baghdad and other cities in 1994-96. This was not difficult to do. "There are plenty of destitute Shia young men," says one Iraqi opposition leader. "They don't have a life and they don't have a future. It is easy to pay them to do something very dangerous like planting a bomb in Baghdad."

As many as 100 civilians may have been killed by the bombing campaign. At first, little was known about it. Iraq admitted that 10 bombs had exploded in Baghdad, but gave no casualty figures. But early in 1996, a strange video was smuggled to Europe, made by the INA's chief bomb-maker, Abu Amneh al-Khadimi, in his

headquarters in the Kurdish city of Sulaymaniyah. He filmed himself because he wanted to charge his superior officer with underpaying him and betraying him to Iraqi intelligence.

Abu Amneh, who comes across as a deeply unpleasant and dangerous man, recounts how he has been reduced to buying "clocks from the souk and turn[ing] them into timers". He complains that he was paid only \$300 for causing an explosion in Baghdad which had cost him \$600. He commends British-made time fuses. He appeals repeatedly over the head of his superior officer – this was a purpose of making the video – to Dr Iyad Alawi, the head of the INA. He says: "For the bombs we detonated in Baghdad, Dr Iyad, all the operations we performed inside, we are now owed about \$5,000."

Such sums were about to become chicken-feed for the INA. As a result of the defection of Lt Gen Hussein Kamel, King Hussein of Jordan turned against his old friends in Baghdad. The CIA persuaded the King to allow the INA to set up a well-funded headquarters in Amman. They bought a radio station for \$3m from Croatia, which they named al-Mustaqbal, or "the Future". In January 1996, President Clinton agreed to pay \$6m towards the INA's operations in Amman. Saudi Arabia and other Arab states paid a similar sum.

It all ended in disaster six months later. Dr Alawi talked happily in Amman about his plans for a coup. But, as so often in the past, Saddam struck first. There was a wave of arrests in Iraq as he purged the army. As many as 80 officers, alleged to be working with the INA, were executed or died under torture. On 31 Kurdistan to wrap up the CIA operation.

This was one of the great disasters in the 50-year history of the agency. So far it has attracted little attention in the US, and the full extent of the debacle has not emerged.

The CIA is also protected by the demonic reputation of its adversary. To many Americans, an attempt to overthrow Saddam, even if a humiliating flop, seems worthwhile. Some 300 Iraqis may have been killed because of the CIA's failed operation, but the dead do not vote, and most died obscurely in underground torture chambers or before Iraqi firing squads.

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Election-day nerves dampen trading

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

New figures push shares to record high but pound falls against mark

As the nation went to the polls there was fresh evidence of the strength of the economy yesterday. The news helped shares close at a record high, although trading was quiet and nervous thanks to caution about the outcome of the election.

The monthly survey of purchasing managers in industry showed that fears of recovery being derailed by the strong pound are, so far, unfounded. The index of activity picked up in April. Output and home orders increased sharply because of booming demand. Export orders continued to increase, although at a slower pace than the previous month. The FTSE 100 index ended

9 points higher at 4,445. A bout of election-day nerves hit currency traders, however.

The pound fell more than a penny to just over DM2.79 as the markets were swept by an after-lunch rumour of exit polling showing the Conservatives ahead in marginal constituencies.

The resulting bout of jitters was explained as fear of a hung parliament and all the resulting uncertainties. A drop in the dollar also helped push the pound lower. But one analyst said, definitely off the record: "We are all such Tories here that we just want to believe the Government can snatch victory from the jaws of defeat."

Another said: "People keep

saying the market has discounted a Labour government. But if the Tories are wiped out, there will be a knee-jerk reaction."

Most of the big securities houses in the City were open throughout the night to deal with business from overseas investors as the result of the general election unfolded. Deals transacted in the small hours will be disclosed this morning.

Yesterday's economic figures concentrated the minds of City economists on the possibility of a rise in interest rates shortly after the election. David Owen at Kleinwort Benson said: "In a perfect world we would have tax

increases to hold back consumer spending, but as it is, the markets are looking for an increase in interest rates."

The next meeting between the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, and the incoming chancellor is scheduled for 7 May, but some analysts speculated it could be postponed after a Labour victory. But even if this did happen, and there was no indication that it would, the Bank of England's inflation report is due to be published on 13 May and is still expected to call for an increase in the cost of borrowing.

The purchasing managers survey showed that the pound's strength had not yet damaged

the recovery in industry, with weakness on the export front offsetting overheating in the home market.

Peter Thomson, director-general of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, said: "This appears to be an almost perfect scenario for the manufacturing economy."

There was steady growth without inflationary pressure.

"The strong pound has stifled demand just enough to keep a lid on things," he said.

The index of activity in manufacturing increased slightly to 53.1 in April, with an increase in output and orders behind the improvement. The output index was almost unchanged at 56.2,

well above the "break-even" level of 50.

Growth in export orders slowed while growth in home orders more than compensated for it. The index for total orders was 55.3, close to its average for the past few months.

At the same time, the prices index was unchanged at 40.5, meaning that prices paid for materials have now been falling for 18 months. "There are no inflationary pressures or capacity constraints," Mr Thomson said.

Other recent indicators have shown that the economy outside manufacturing is expanding at a far faster pace. In the first quarter of this year national in-

come, the widest available measure, grew by 1 per cent thanks mainly to booming service industries.

Yesterday Halifax reported that house prices rose 0.3 per cent last month, almost the same as the increase reported by Nationwide Building Society earlier in the week. It reported a decline in the annual rate of house price inflation to 6.6 per cent from 7.2 per cent in March.

Halifax said London was seeing the sharpest price rises. It described price increases elsewhere as "moderate".

The split in the economy between industry vulnerable to a downturn in exports due to the strong pound and a booming

consumer and service sector has divided City experts. Simon Briscoe at Nikko Europe argued that an increase in base rates would hurt industry, and said the next chancellor should leave them unchanged.

"Labour has a marvellous opportunity. They have a following wind here in the City," he said. Jonathan Loyens at HSBC Markets said the economy needed a post-election rate rise like a hole in the head.

But David Bloom at James Capel said yesterday's survey showed that sterling was not about to drag the economy into recession.

"Doing nothing would be terrible. In the real world, they can't raise taxes for political reasons so they must at least put up interest rates," he said.

Killik joins queue to distance itself from Regan bid

Tom Stevenson
and Nigel Cope

Killik & Co, the stockbroker, yesterday became the latest company embroiled in the Co-op affair to distance itself from Regan, Lanica Trust and Galileo, the vehicle set up to launch his failed £1.2bn bid for the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

In a statement, the firm said it condemned "the use of dishonest tactics" and sincerely regretted its name had been associated "with any improper behaviour". It had severed all links with Mr Regan.

The attempt by Killik to distance itself from Mr Regan, following the collapse of his bid attempt and the launch of a Serious Fraud Office inquiry into dealings between the CWS and one of its former stock market vehicles, follows similar moves this week by Schroders, Hambros and Travers Smith Braithwaite, the solicitors. HSBC James Capel also said it had resigned this week as stockbroker to Lanica Trust.

The moves coincide with the launch of an Exchange inquiry into possible insider dealing in the shares of Lanica Trust, which soared from 58p last October to a peak of £20.50 in January before they were finally suspended at £19.50 in March.

The inquiry will focus on the extent to which investors were aware of Mr Regan's planned bid for the CWS at the time they bought into the company.

It is understood that when Galileo was set up with a share capital of £9.6m, more than

three times the net asset value of its 90 per cent-owned parent Lanica, investors were invited to subscribe for shares without knowing for what they were putting up seed capital.

Admitting that it had bought shares on behalf of 200 investors in early December 1996 at around 200p a share, Killik said that at the time of the purchase nobody within the firm was aware that Lanica was planning a bid for the CWS.

The purchases made by the partners and staff fully complied with the SFA conduct of business rules, the statement said. According to Killik, a further £2m was invested in Galileo, including £122,398 from partners and staff of the firm, although at the time of the investment no attempt was made to discover for what purpose Galileo had been set up. It was only some weeks later, in January 1997, that Killik asked and was told that Galileo had been set up for the purpose of bidding for the CWS.

Killik concluded its statement by saying that "no one within the firm has seen any CWS confidential documents, nor were they aware that such documents were in circulation until this issue became public".

Killik said it had been strongly influenced in its decision to recommend investment in Lanica Trust and Galileo by the pedigree of Lanica's advisers and alliances manager with Business Systems Group, a systems integrator specialising in serving the City, said the various chip makers were always leapingfrogging each other with faster products.

He pointed out that Intel's strength came from its close

relationships with Microsoft and other software producers. "It's not just speed, it's partnership. It's the close coupling of the processor with the operating system."

Moreover, Intel says that the Pentium II is the first business processor to apply the Multimedia Extension, or MMX, technology launched by the company earlier this year. So far, this has primarily been used to operate computer games because it offers much better graphics.

However, the increasing popularity of such features as video-conferencing on office computers has created a huge demand for the product, said a spokeswoman.

AMD, whose processor division is based in Austin, Texas, recently announced that Digital would be incorporating its chips in its products, while it is understood that Hewlett-Packard is planning to fit both AMD and Intel processors to the equipment it offers.

Industry observers point out that others are continuing to stick with Intel, indicating that the California-based company is still felt to have the edge in a fiercely competitive industry. A sign of the significance of the latest development is the fact that Intel - which, according to the latest Fortune 500 rankings, saw revenues rise more than 28 per cent last year to \$20.8bn (£12.8bn) - is sending senior executives to the London launch.



Commercial flair: Bill Cockburn, chief executive of WH Smith, described Beverley Hodson (above) as having the right qualities and energy to drive our sales growth. Photograph: Philip Meech

WH Smith aims for recovery with female director

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

WH Smith appointed its first female executive director yesterday when it named Beverley Hodson as managing director of the main WH Smith high street chain.

Ms Hodson, 45, replaces Peter Bamford who left abruptly last month as part of the four-year plan by Bill Cockburn, chief executive, to rejuvenate the struggling retailer's fortunes.

Ms Hodson becomes the second woman on the WH Smith board. Marjorie Scardino, the new chief executive of the Pearson media group, is a non-executive director.

Ms Hodson will join Smith's next month after 10 months at Sears where she was managing director of the Dolcis and Cable & Co footwear chains. Prior to that she spent 18 years at Boots, where she had been general manager of the Boots the Chemist leisure business and, more recently, head of the Children's World group which was sold to Storehouse last year.

Mr Cockburn said: "What we need at WH Smith retail is someone with very strong commercial flair to develop our buying and merchandising and to drive our sales growth. Beverley has considerable strength in those areas." He described her as a "Duracell battery of energy".

However, the appointment failed to impress the City, where analysts described Ms Hodson as "a relatively unknown quantity". John Richards of NatWest Securities said: "This is not the high-powered appointment that we had been led to expect. She is taking on what it arguably one

of the most difficult jobs in retailing."

Other analysts said that, though Ms Hodson had enjoyed a successful career at Boots, she has never managed a chain the size of WH Smith.

Mr Cockburn will remain as chairman of the high street chain. This prompted some analysts to speculate that the position of managing director will be a lesser role as Mr Cockburn continues to oversee the core chain.

The company was keen to emphasise Ms Hodson's career at Boots, which has managed to fight successfully against competition from the supermarkets while WH Smith has struggled.

Robin Dickie, the operations director of WH Smith is also a former Boots executive. "We're trying to benchmark ourselves against excellence," Mr Cockburn said.

Ms Hodson will be chaired with trying to revitalise the Smith's format, driving the average customer purchase higher and improving the product range. The success of the core chain is seen as vital to the revival of WH Smith's profits which have been hit by weak sales and intense competition.

Ms Hodson was educated at Blackheath High School for girls and at Newnham College Cambridge. She is married with one child.

Separately, Alan Giles is to become the WH Smith representative director on the Virgin Our Price joint venture board. He will remain managing director of Waterstones. WH Smith shares closed 8.5p higher at 466.5p.

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Intel's latest chip faces hot competition

Roger Trapp

A significant battle is set to break out in the computer industry next week when Intel, the world's largest chip-maker, launches its latest product.

The multi-ported Pentium II processor, which comes out on Tuesday, enables information to be dealt with much faster than its predecessors.

However, the rival manufacturer AMD has already slipped its K6 product, which is thought to be comparable with the Pentium II, on to the market and other products are expected shortly.

Richard Baker, UK marketing manager with AMD, said the company hoped that the encouraging reception given to its product so far would enable it

to strengthen its position in the market.

The arrival of this kind of competition is leading some industry observers to predict a challenge to Intel's hitherto dominant position, which currently amounts to about 80 per cent of the personal computer market. "For the first time, people have a choice," said one.

Others are not sure that Intel's position will be seriously threatened. Roy Howitt, sales and alliances manager with Business Systems Group, a systems integrator specialising in serving the City, said the various chip makers were always leapingfrogging each other with faster products.

He pointed out that Intel's strength came from its close

relationships with Microsoft and other software producers. "It's not just speed, it's partnership. It's the close coupling of the processor with the operating system."

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Computer manufacturers such as Hewlett-Packard and Gateway will be demonstrating products fitted with the chip, while BA will be revealing how the new processor has helped it create a three-dimensional computer model of Heathrow Airport's Terminal 5.

Intel anticipates that computers fitted with the new chip will sell for less than £2,000. However, regardless of whether AMD gains the bigger share it is seeking, there will be a boost for consumers who - unlike the corporates - are prepared to settle for second best.

As always happens when a new product of this sort is launched, the immediately preceding technology becomes cheaper.

Ireland lifts base rates to defend shaky punt

Alan Murdoch
Dublin

Ireland's central bank yesterday reacted to two turbulent days for the punt on foreign exchange markets by lifting base rates by half a percentage point.

Heavy speculation against the punt saw it plunge seven pence against the German mark on Wednesday. A 2.5p fall took the Irish currency to its lowest value against sterling for five years, slumping at one stage to 91.5p.

Parallel pressure on domestic money markets prompted the bank to increase its base rate

or short-term facility to 6.75 per cent with effect from this morning. The move was expected after the bank on Wednesday stopped buying punts to shore up the currency's value.

The punt has been targeted by speculators in recent weeks because Ireland is among Europe's strongest economic performers in qualifying for the start of the European single currency in 1999.

Ireland's "Celtic Tiger" revival has seen the currency strengthen in recent years. But many dealers believe the punt will join the single currency at a lower value against conti-




nental currencies than its recent ERM level.

Buoyed by a bullish medium-term economic forecast this week by Ireland's Economic and Social Research Institute, Ruairi Quinn, Finance Minister, emphasised that the country was no longer tied to sterling.

The institute's forecast, the most hopeful in decades, concluded that if current policies and voluntary pay restraint continue, Ireland should maintain GNP growth of 5.5 per cent until 2000, slowing to 5 per cent between 2000 and 2005. This will see Ireland pass the UK standard of living before 2005.

STOCK MARKETS					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low
FTSE 100	4445.00	+8.00	+0.2	4445.00	4056.60
FTSE 250	4502.10	+3.40	+0.1	4729.40	4469.40
FTSE 350	2172.50	+3.80	+0.2	2194.30	2017.90
FTSE SmallCap	2296.34	+	+0.0	2374.20	2178.29
FTSE All-Share	2138.89	+	+0.0	2163.94	1989.78
New York	6960.83	-48.15	-0.7	7085.16	5032.94
Tokyo	19276.33	+124.21	+0.6	19448.00	17303.85
Hong Kong	13020.78	+117.48	+0.9	13868.24	12055.17
Frankfurt	closed			3460.59	2848.77

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES								
Short sterling*		UK medium gilt		US long bond				
								
* Daily bank interest calculated		* January 05/1986						
Money Market Rates			Bond Yields *					
Index	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	Year Ago	Long Bond			
UK	8.25	7.00	7.40	8.03	7.49			
US	5.82	6.25	6.69	6.66	6.93			
Japan	0.53	0.81	2.33	2.51	-			
Germany	3.12	3.25	-	6.34	-			
* Benchmark indices								
MAIN PRICE CHANGES								
Rises	Falls	Price (p)	Change (p)	Change (%)	Falls			
Danka Bus Sys	477.5	30	6.7		Williams Higgs	311	0	0
Ashville Holdings	105.5	5	5.0		Williams Higgs	319	13.5	4.7
Cmg	1142.5	52.5	4.8		Bicc	221.5	9	3.9

CURRENCIES					
Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday
\$/£	1.6240	-0.030	1.4965	£/DM	0.6158
\$/¥	1.6240	+0.030	1.4965	£/¥	0.6158
DM/£	1.6240	-0.030	1.4965	DM/¥	1.7106
¥/£	205.05	-30.961	197.305	¥/DM	128.720
£/Index	99.7	-0.4	83.5	£/Index	105.9

OTHER INDICATORS					
Index	Yesterday	Day's change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday
Oil Brent \$	10.35	-0.05	19.33	RPI	155.4+2.6pc
Gold \$	341.05	+0.95	393.35	GDP	199.7+2.6pc
Gold £	210.01	+0.41	262.98	Base Rates	-6.00pc

Shell cautious on oil prices after flat Q1

The Anglo-Dutch oil giant Royal Dutch Shell yesterday painted a cautious picture on oil prices and refining margins as it reported a flat set of first-quarter profit figures, writes Michael Harrison.

Current cost net income for the period was £1.54bn against £1.53bn last year while net income showed a 19 per cent drop from £1.7bn in the first quarter of 1996 to £1.4bn. The shares fell 8p to 1072p. Shell warned that the steady fall in oil prices since the start of the year was set to continue, exacerbated by an excess of production over demand. "Crude

prices may show further weakness. Refining margins are also expected to remain under pressure," the company said.

The group also pointed to the strength of sterling, which had the effect of masking an underlying 7 per cent increase in earnings in dollar terms. The average oil price in the first quarter was \$21.2 a barrel - \$2.60 a barrel higher than a year ago. Shell's exploration and production earnings for the quarter were the second highest on record at £996m.

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Don't expect the oil giants to opt for demerger

COMMENT

Their very size makes it easier for them to take big commercial risks. If the project goes wrong, investors will certainly suffer, but provided the company is efficiently run, it can be absorbed.

Is there any purpose to, or justification for, integrated oil companies - the industry giants that combine exploration and production with refining and retailing - or would consumers and shareholders alike be better served by splitting them into their constituent parts? There is nothing particularly novel about this suggestion which, a bit like a passing comet, tends to turn up unannounced from time to time before disappearing again into the cosmos. Right now it is once more in full view, thanks largely to Pierre Jungels, the new chief executive at Enterprise Oil. Enterprise is a pure E&P company, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that Mr Jungels believes the integrated structure has had its day, that they are going to be outperformed by more focused pure refining, retailing and E&P companies.

Mr Jungels believes not only that there is no particular purpose to the integrated structure, but that it can be positively harmful to the businesses that make it up. Just ask Shell, which at its annual general meeting on 14 May faces a special resolution calling on the board to clean up its act on human rights and the environment. Single issue campaigning of this sort, whether justified or not, easily spills over from the business it is aimed at - in this case Shell's E&P activities in Nigeria - into the company's consumer-facing interests elsewhere. Before Nigeria there was the Brent Spar fiasco, prompting a consumer boycott of Shell's petrol retailing business in Germany. Likewise, BP has had to work hard at preventing politically inspired complaints about its E&P activities in Columbia spilling over into its retail businesses in the more developed world. In other words, what a company has to do to get the stuff out of the ground may be unacceptable to those who happily buy it.

Even the term "integrated oil company" has become a bit of a misnomer, for these companies have not been "integrated" in the accepted sense of the word for many years now. The petrol being sold by Shell or BP is as likely to be derived from Esso or Mobil as their own oil fields, and it might as easily have been refined by someone else again. Each business operates within its own market place, largely regardless of the company's other interests up or downstream of it. The senior executive who has to deal with the problems of his retail company is highly likely to find it a distraction from the possibly more important challenges facing his E&P or refining interests.

Moreover, the traditional defence of the integrated structure - that the up- and downstream interests are largely counter-cyclical - was rather exploded during the last recession when all three activities, production, refining and retailing, got clobbered at the same time. The low oil price failed to drive up consumer demand, as it had tended to in previous cycles. Most of the majors have made progress in differentiating the cost structures of their various businesses in an appropriate manner, but the problem is still there. The highly paid E&P executive drags up the pay structure throughout the organisation, even in unskilled areas of the company where the market dictates poorer rates of remuneration. Even the cost of capital is often no better for a major than a smaller, more focused E&P company, since investors are prepared to pay a premium for the pure exploration play.

So much for the downside. There is, however, one very significant advantage the big boys have. Their very size makes it much easier for them to take big commercial risks. If the project goes wrong, investors will certainly suffer, but provided the company is efficiently run and managed, it can be absorbed. The smaller player, with the risk of wipe-out to consider, is much more constrained and his opportunity is correspondingly limited. This is the case in most businesses but it is particularly pronounced in oil and gas. So although logic must be on Mr Jungels' side, we are unlikely to see BP and Shell hurtling down the demerger route, much as free-hungry investment bankers would like them to.

An unknown quantity at WH Smith

At first glance a refugee from the troubled Asda shoe retailing empire does not look like the most obvious candidate to revitalise the almost equally troubled retail arm of WH Smith. That, however, is the task Beverley Hodson has been chosen to perform. She may have a great future ahead of her. She may be just the breath of fresh air needed at WH Smith, an institution that still conjures up images of crusty paternalism and male-domination. Looked at one way, anything she does has got to be an improvement on Project Enliven, the ridiculous wheeze the last but one management dreamt up to restore the brand's fortunes.

But for now she is largely an unknown quantity and certainly not the big hitter the City had been expecting. Bill Cockburn to bring in to head up the group's biggest and most important division. Until yesterday Ms Hodson was managing director of Sears' Dolcis and Cable & Co shoe chains, a post she had held for less than a year. That may not have been long enough to be tainted with the failure of the Lian Strong years. But it does suggest that Ms Hodson's credentials are unimpaired.

Before Sears she spent 18 years with Boots the Chemist, where she reclaimed its line in sustenance units until being picked to run its chain of Children's World shops. That may prove to have been, well, child's play compared with running WH Smith's sprawling chain of 400 high street outlets. Despite all Mr Cockburn's best efforts Smith still suffers from the twin handicap of selling a thousand different lines and yet finding it difficult to get customers to part with much money once inside its shops.

Jeremy Hardie, the chairman of WH Smith, says Ms Hodson has just the right blend of experience, skills and determination needed to succeed. Before she gets into harness in June, it would pay dividends to check out what the chairman said about her predecessor, Peter Bamford, before he was unceremoniously dumped last month. It might sound familiar.

Ignorance was bliss at Killik

The investment proposition outlined by Killik & Co yesterday as it joined the stampede to distance itself from Andrew Regan and his ill-fated bid to storm the Co-op would not have been out of place in the heady days of the South Sea Bubble.

Way back in the joint stock company's infancy, it was standard practice to ask investors to put up cash for as yet unplanned enterprises. Killik showed yesterday that little has changed at the more, shall we say, adventurous end of the investment spectrum. By the firm's own admission, Killik stamped up £2m, including more than £120,000 of personal account money from its partners and staff, to back Galileo, happily unaware that it was to be the takeover vehicle for one of the most audacious bid attempts in recent times. It saw no reason to ask anything so mundane as just what Galileo was for.

Mr Regan may be touched by the faith so many "blind" investors placed in his entrepreneurial skills. Whether the Stock Exchange agrees that ignorance was bliss is another thing.

ING Barings acts to retain stake in Dillon Read

David Osborne
New York

In a bid to retain a valuable window on to Wall Street, ING Barings is scrambling to hold on to a 25 per cent stake that it holds in the investment bank Dillon Read and, if possible, to purchase the other 75 per cent.

ING's foothold in Dillon Read, which has performed strongly recently as a mergers and acquisition boutique, dates back to ING's rescue of Barings two years ago. Barings Holding Company, as it was before its collapse, had bought 40 per cent of Dillon Read in 1991.

A struggle is now raging between ING and Dillon Read over the 25 per cent still in ING's hands. Dillon Read has the option to re-acquire that stake by the end of June and until recently appeared set on doing so. Dillon Read's executives hold the other 75 per cent.

ING confirmed from its Amsterdam headquarters yesterday that it would prefer not to lose its interest and proceed instead to buying all of the bank. "If the conditions are right for both parties, it would be nice to have it all," said a company spokesman.

He indicated that talks were under way and should be completed within the next fortnight, with the issue of price the biggest sticking point. Unconfirmed reports have suggested that to buy the balance of the privately held bank's stock, ING would have to find between \$425m and \$450m (£262m-£277m).

That Dillon Read would be an attractive catch for ING is evident. Like other merger and acquisition specialists on Wall Street, the bank has benefited handsomely from the recent rush of corporate combinations. After being briefly bruised in March, optimism that the merger surge will continue has returned with the new upwards momentum of the New York stock markets.

There is still little evidence of enthusiasm on the part of Dillon Read for a full ING takeover. Rather, indications in New York point to some friction in the negotiations.

"As you know, Dillon Read has been in discussion with



Lady Grantchester: Appointed to the board in 1977

Moore's matriarch quits Littlewoods board

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

The most senior member of the Moore family, which controls the Littlewoods retail and football pools empire, has resigned as a director, leaving just one family member on the board.

Lady Grantchester, the 72-year-old daughter of the company's founder, Sir John Moore, is to retire as a non-executive. The matriarch of the Moore clan, Lady Grantchester was a key figure in the family's decision to reject a £1bn takeover offer by former chief executive Barry Dale in late 1995.

A strong-willed woman, with a distinctive Margaret Thatcher hairstyle, she has long been the family figurehead and has served on the Littlewoods board for 20 years.

Her departure leaves James Suenson-Taylor as the only member of the Moore family on the board. He is one of Lady Grantchester's sons and acts as a non-executive director with special responsibility for linking between the board and the family shareholders.

Commenting on her decision she said: "Although I have decided to retire from the board of the Littlewoods Organisation, I will obviously retain a strong interest in the company as a shareholder and be available for consultation."

Betty Grantchester was educated at Cheltenham Ladies College and her father was reportedly delighted when she married Kenneth Suenson-Taylor, the second Baron Grantchester. She was appointed to the board in 1977 following the death of Nigel Moore in a car crash. Nigel, the nephew of Sir John, had been earmarked as a potential future chairman. Lady Grantchester's husband died last year.

A company spokeswoman said Lady Grantchester had been pleased with the progress of Littlewoods under chief executive James Ross. He has this week agreed to acquire the Freemans mail order business from Sears for £367.5m. The company is also seeking buyers for its high street stores.

IN BRIEF

US data paints 'picture of strength'

The National Association of Purchasing Management in the US said its lead index last month fell from 55 to 54.2. The number was above forecasts of 53.6, but economists said the price index, which fell to 49.6 from 50.9 in March, should put US credit markets in a buoyant mood before today's all-important April jobs data. Economists said the NAPM and price data painted a picture of continued US economic strength devoid of any concrete evidence of inflation. "It's kind of a microcosm of all the other data we got on the economy, strong real economic activity but still great price performance," said John Williams, chief economist at Bankers Trust.

Fisher Price toy factory to close

A toy factory is to close with the loss of 250 jobs, the victim of a decision by the US owner to cut one-tenth of its global workforce of 26,000. The closure of the Fisher Price and Spears Games plant at Peterlee, County Durham, would result in production being switched to Italy where toy output was more in line with modern youngsters' demands and more cost-competitive, said a spokesman for the parent company, Mattel. The Peterlee factory specialised in making bigger toys which were considered less fashionable with children. A Mattel spokesman said: "The way the market is going, retailers are looking for smaller, more compact toys, such as electronic games, which is the sort of operation Mattel has in Italy."

Nomura can beat scandal, says president

Junichi Ujii, new president of Nomura Securities, claimed the scandal-tainted brokerage would be able to catch up with its foreign rivals in one to two years and might even overtake them in some fields. In a speech to employees, he said he would change Nomura into a company which always obeyed the law and acted with confidence and pride. "We need to do it now. This is our last chance. I will change Nomura with courage and conviction." Mr Ujii took control of Nomura following a sweeping management shake-up, after prosecutors and Japan's securities watchdog launched an investigation of the brokerage for suspected illegal deals linked to corporate racketeers.

Currency movements hold back T&N

T&N warned that it expected its rate of progress in the current year to be held back by currency movements. Sir Colin Hope, chairman, told the annual meeting: "The year has started on an encouraging note with our operating performance edging ahead of last year and margins on an improving trend. Nevertheless, the rate of progress in the current year is still likely to be constrained by currency movements and the high level of restructuring charges flowing from essential cost reduction and efficiency programmes."

Birmingham Midshires locks in investors

Birmingham Midshires Building Society will automatically close all new accounts opened from 1 May once any money is withdrawn. The move to lock in all new investors was taken to discourage speculators hoping to cash in if the society decides to convert to being a bank or is taken over. The minimum to open a membership account is £1,000 but more than 3,000 of the 100,000 new accounts this year have quickly been reduced to £100, the minimum for retaining membership.

Barr to auction coach division

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

Barr & Wallace Arnold Trust said yesterday it was inviting offers for its coach holidays division, opening the door for the business's management to table a rival bid to a controversial offer from Leisureplus, owner of rival Shearings holiday group. Hambros, the merchant bank, is conducting an auction for the division among interested parties, of whom there are thought to be at least 10.

The proposed sale of the coach operation, which would leave Barr as a pure motor dealer, has caused bitter acrimony in the company's northern heartland, where the Wallace Arnold name is seen as being as Yorkshire as its pudding. Angry employees have taken out full-page advertisements in local papers opposing the disposal and picketed board meetings in a campaign as bruising for the company as a bitter boardroom row two years ago between rival factions of the ruling Barr family.

At the heart of the row is the belief that if Shearings, a former division of Rank, acquires the operation, up to 1,000 jobs could be at risk. The mood of the workforce is markedly different from the atmosphere late last year when it looked likely that Barr would be buying Shearings from Rank and the jobs at risk were those of the Lancashire company. Richard Bell, a company spokesman, refused to comment yesterday on the value of the coach business but analysts believed it could be worth around £35m.

Investment column, page 26

New Savings Rates from the Bristol & West.

Reflecting changes only to the accounts shown below. EFFECTIVE 2ND MAY 1997 (unless otherwise stated). † Effective 12th May 1997.

ACCOUNT	AMOUNT INVESTED	GROSS RATE OF INTEREST PA* (VARIABLE)	NET PA**	ACCOUNT	AMOUNT INVESTED	GROSS RATE OF INTEREST PA* (VARIABLE)	NET PA**
INSTANT ACCESS DEPOSIT	£100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,000+ £1,000+ £500+ £1+	3.15% 3.15% 2.95% 2.65% 2.25% 2.05% 1.90% 1.80% 0.20%	2.52% 2.52% 2.36% 2.12% 1.80% 1.64% 1.52% 1.44% 0.16%	PREMIER PLUS MONTHLY INCOME ISSUE 1 Three months notice required for withdrawal, and interest paid monthly.	£100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,000+ £500+	4.84% 4.65% 4.31% 3.96% 3.55% 2.96% 2.76%	3.87% 3.72% 3.48% 3.18% 2.68% 2.37% 2.21%
90 DAY NOTICE ACCOUNT Interest paid annually.	£100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,500+ £500+	4.95% 4.75% 4.40% 4.05% 3.40% 3.00% 2.80%	3.96% 3.80% 3.48% 3.24% 2.72% 2.40% 2.24%	BONUS TESSA (No longer available).	£3000+ £500+ £1+	4.75% 3.25% 0.70%	
90 DAY NOTICE ACCOUNT Interest paid monthly.	£100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,500+ £500+	4.84% 4.65% 4.31% 3.96% 3.55% 2.96% 2.76%	3.87% 3.72% 3.48% 3.18% 2.68% 2.37% 2.21%	PREMIER TESSA (FOLLOW UP) (Issues 1 & 2)	£9,000+ £5,000+ £3,000+ £500+ £1+	6.10% 5.80% 5.80% 4.00% 0.45%	
TESSA PLUS DEPOSIT	£3000+ £500+ £1+	5.90% 5.80% 1.20%		TESSA PLUS	£3000+ £500+ £1+	5.90% 4.40% 1.20%	
TESSA TWO DEPOSIT (Issues 1 & 2)	£9,000+ £5,000+ £3,000+ £500+	6.10% 5.80% 5.80% 4.00%		PREMIER RESERVE BOND	£1,000+	5.95%	4.76%
PREMIER SAVER An instant access account for investors who limit their access over a 12 month period (No Withdrawals).	£100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,000+ £1,000+ £500+	4.15% 4.15% 3.95% 3.65% 3.25% 3.05% 2.25% 2.80%	3.32% 3.32% 3.16% 2.92% 2.60% 2.44% 2.12% 2.24%	FULLY PAID SHARE (Rates also apply to Cheshunt Investment Share, Cheshunt Clubs, Cheshunt Co-Thrift and Cheshunt Subs. Share, all no longer available).	£50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,000+ £500+ £1+	2.42% 2.28% 1.98% 1.64% 1.44% 0.60% 0.20%	1.94% 1.82% 1.59% 1.31% 1.15% 0.48% 0.16%
(1-6 Withdrawals)	£100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,000+ £1,000+ £500+	3.15% 3.15% 2.95% 2.65% 2.25% 2.05% 1.90% 1.80%	2.52% 2.52% 2.36% 2.12% 1.80% 1.64% 1.52% 1.44%	SELECT (No longer available).	£50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,000+ £500+ £1+	2.45% 2.30% 2.00% 1.65% 1.45% 0.60% 0.20%	1.96% 1.84% 1.60% 1.32% 1.16% 0.48% 0.16%
(More than 6 Withdrawals) (Rates also apply to Premier Save Bond Issue 4 - no longer available).	£100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,000+ £1,000+ £500+	2.45% 2.45% 2.30% 2.00% 1.65% 1.45% 0.60% 0.60%	1.96% 1.96% 1.84% 1.60% 1.32% 1.16% 0.48% 0.48%	SPECIAL MONTHLY INCOME (No longer available) Rates also apply to High 30 Monthly Income, Cheshunt Instant Income, Better Option Bond Income Issue 1, Overseas Monthly Income (†), No 1 Income (†), Triple Bonus Monthly Income (†), Premier Option Bond all Issues (Monthly Income) Fixed and Variable, Escalator Bond Issue 3 (Monthly Income), all no longer available.	£30,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,000+ £500+ £1+	2.42% 2.28% 1.98% 1.64% 1.44% 0.60% 0.20%	1.94% 1.82% 1.59% 1.31% 1.15% 0.48% 0.16%
PREMIER PLUS CAPITAL ISSUE 1 Three months notice required for withdrawal (Rates also apply to Guaranteed Investment Account Issue 5 and Guaranteed Investment Account Extra Issues 1 & 2).	£100,000+ £50,000+ £25,000+ £10,000+ £5,000+ £2,000+ £500+	4.95% 4.75% 4.40% 4.05% 3.40% 3.00% 2.80%	3.96% 3.80% 3.48% 3.24% 2.72% 2.40% 2.24%				

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business

Shell high-octane rating overdone

Judged against Royal Dutch Shell's exceptional performance in the first quarter of 1996, its results for the first three months of this year were respectable enough. Current cost net income came in flat at £1.54bn – bang in the middle of analysts' forecasts. What spooked the market, however, was Shell's downbeat assessment of prospects for the rest of the year.

Bearish commentators have been warning for some time that we should expect a substantial weakening in crude prices and Shell has said nothing to contradict that impression. Prices have been falling steadily since the start of the year, registering an average of \$21.60 for the quarter.

The picture is one of a continuing decline in prices and pressure on refining margins against a background of rising output in Opec and non-Opec areas. This is likely to result in production outstripping demand, leading to rising inventories.

Add in a strong pound, which held back current cost earnings in the first quarter by 7 per cent, and the outlook is not all that rosy for any of the big oil companies.

Higher exploration and production earnings helped offset increased corporate charges and a fall in earnings from refining and marketing operations in the first quarter.

Shell also managed a modest improvement in chemicals in the first three months but this was only achieved through on-going cost reductions whereas margins weakened. The improvement may stretch into the second quarter but thereafter much depends on Shell's ability to recover the increase in cracker prices by raising the price of derivative products.

With oil and gas production likely to keep growing at around 7 per cent a year, Shell has the scope to complement this strong upstream growth with rationalisation benefits elsewhere, notably chemicals.

However, falling crude prices this year could hold back dollar income. Taken together with the strength of sterling and guilders weakness this could translate into a decline in earnings for the year in domestic currency terms.

Shell's growth prospects are no more than average for the sector – reflected in the decline in first-quarter capital expenditure and exploration costs.

Meanwhile Shell's return on capital employed, at 11.8 per cent for the year to the end of March, continues to lag behind its peers.

Taken as a whole, Shell remains on a high-octane rating. The boost to the share price that came with the news earlier this year of a stock split and capitalisation issue has merely left it even more vulnerable to a rating. Shell is overvalued relative to BP by as much

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

as 25 per cent, making BP a better bet given its growth prospects and higher returns on capital.

Assuming Shell group profits of £3.1bn this year rising to £5.6bn in 1998, the shares, down 9p at 1.081p, are on a forward multiple of 19 times falling to 17.7. High enough.

Barr's cash pile could reach £35m

Barr & Wallace Arnold Trust's decision to place its workforce by inviting offers for its coach holding division rather than simply selling it to rival Shearings really makes little difference as far as the remaining operations are concerned. Whether the business is sold to Shearings, its management or a third party, the company becomes a pure motor distributor with a cash pile of maybe £35m to hand back to shareholders or invest in the ramp car activities.

Whether Barr is right to dispose of the coach activities, and so give up a useful counter-balance to its cyclical car sales operations, is a moot point. The company argues that it is misun-

derstood by the City because of its two diverse activities, which has a grain of truth in it, but there are plenty of motor businesses with other interests – Cowie's buses and Henlys' coach manufacture, for example – to suggest that the problem is not insuperable.

But the decision has been made, and the Office of Fair Trading seems happy to countenance the concentration of power represented by a merger of former Rank division Shearings and the "Wally Buses", so all shareholders can hope for is a sensible price.

Their attention will now turn to how Barr's motor dealing operations will fare in a fast-changing and consolidating business.

Arguably the current trend towards big multiple-franchise dealerships acts in favour of the larger players such as Peardragon and Reg Vardy at the expense of smaller operators such as Barr. But there is a plausible counter-argument that the large manufacturers are unwilling to hand over too much power to dealers with clout, leaving a useful niche for regional players.

Barr's supporters point furthermore to the coach activities, good management team and tight geographical concentration which allows it to dominate the markets where it is strong such as Ford

around Glasgow. If it chooses to spend its £35m windfall on expanding its dealerships, analysts believe it will make a decent fist of it.

Despite that, Barr's shares, up 8.5p to 258.5p yesterday, trade on only about 10 times expected earnings for this year, a significant discount to the rest of the market.

A dividend this year of 12.5p a share, implying a gross yield of 6 per cent, provides some degree of comfort. Good value.

Etam dives deeper into the red

Etam, the womenswear chain, plunged deeper into the red in the year to 25 January, as price discounting took its toll of static volumes. Turnover fell by 7 per cent to £187m while losses mustered to £3.37m, compared with a modest profit of £150,000 the year before.

Etam's chairman, Stanley Lewis, claims the sales decline was concentrated in the first half-year and steadied in the second half, while the proportion of sales at full prices has rebounded to over 80 per cent and justifies the merchandise and trading strategies of the group.

Up to a point, turnover in the first half was down 11 per cent on the previous first half. In the second half it was down only 2 per cent on the first half and 2.5 per cent down on the second half of the previous year.

But the seasonal upturn in profits in the second half was much more muted this year, and at £390,000 was well down on the £4m in the previous year.

Even after allowing for the £2.5m of strategic expenditure on the first phase of a brand relaunch and for spending on information technology in the latest second half, there is no evidence of a real recovery in Etam's profits.

In the first 13 weeks of the current trading year, full-price sales were up 6 per cent and like-for-like sales rose 2 per cent, but the City is not convinced.

Etam's sales should be improving faster given the recent kind weather, more costs are in the pipeline and analysts who felt the group could break even by the end of the current year are now forecasting losses of around £2.5m.

The shares fell 8.5p to 125p, their lowest level since the recession of 1990, and the controlling shareholders, based in South Africa, show no obvious signs of impatience. There is no obvious case to hold the shares, still less to buy.

Wickes plans new stores for 1998

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Wickes, the troubled Do-It-Yourself retailer which is attempting to put last year's £50m accounting scandal behind it, is to start a store-opening programme next year.

They will be the first new Wickes stores to open since the company unearthed the accounting irregularities which forced a rescue rights issue, a boardroom clear-out and the sale of entire overseas operations.

Starting in 1998, Wickes will open between five and 10 new stores a year for the next five years. This will take the total portfolio from the current 123 to a possible 173. No new branches are planned for the current year.

Bill Grimsey, chief executive, said the sale of the continental

European operations, announced on Wednesday, "completed the final piece in the jigsaw", enabling the company to start looking at extending its UK stores chain.

Mr Grimsey was speaking at the Wickes annual meeting where he delivered an upbeat trading statement. He said that in the 17 weeks to 26 April same store sales were 14 per cent of the same period last year. Total sales were 20 per cent ahead, including the 13 new stores which opened in the first half.

Mr Grimsey said Wickes had been helped by the firm housing market and the good recent spell of weather. He would not comment on the group's margins, though it is thought that these have been affected by the renegotiation of supplier contracts following the uncovering of the accounting scandal.

Mr Grimsey said he had received no contact from any parties regarding a possible takeover. "We are not even thinking about that. We are concentrating on getting on with the job of being good retailers."

The upbeat trading statement pushed Wickes shares 12.5p higher to 178.5p. The buoyant mood also boosted other DIY-related stocks. Shares in Kingfisher, which owns the B&Q chain, and Boots, owner of Do It All, were both sharply higher. Sainsbury, which controls the Homebase chain, also saw its shares rise.

On Wednesday Wickes sold its European operation in Holland, Belgium and France to the French DIY operator, Bricorama.

With the South African business already sold, the deal leaves Wickes as a UK-only DIY operator.

Warning hammers Bernard Matthews

Clifford German

Investors in Bernard Matthews, the food company best known for its turkey products, were dealt a blow yesterday when Bernard Matthews, founder and chairman of the Norfolk-based group, issued a profits warning to shareholders at the annual meeting.

Shares in the company swiftly tumbled by 12.5p to 127p, wiping £15m off its stock market value.

The share price performance has been steady over the past year, rising from a low of 95p to a peak of 142p.

Mr Matthews said that profits in the second quarter of the year would not compare favourably with the excellent figures a year ago.

This time last year, the company benefited from the BSE scare which caused a flight of beef consumers to other meat products. The company was



Leaner times: Bernard Matthews is cautiously optimistic

also able to push through price increases with little adverse impact on sales.

However, the chairman attempted to temper yesterday's warning with a hint of optimism on prospects. He said: "We believe this to be a short-term situation and remain cautiously optimistic for the year as a

whole, as we continue the expansion of our branded added-value business."

Hardest hit by the share price fall yesterday was Mr Matthews himself and his family which still owns almost 40 per cent of the company and was actively buying more a month ago.

BBC tops the poll at BAFTA

BEST DRAMA SERIES EASTENDERS Corinne Hollingsworth/Jane Harris BBC1	X	BEST COMEDY ONLY FOOLS AND HORSES Gareth Gwenlan/Tony Dow/John Sullivan BBC1	X
BEST DRAMA SERIAL OUR FRIENDS IN THE NORTH Charles Pattinson/Peter James/Simon Cellan Jones/Stuart Urban/Peter Plannery BBC2	X	BEST LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT SHOOTING STARS Alan Marke/Mark Mylod BBC2	X
BEST FACTUAL SERIES THE HOUSE Michael Waldman/Andrew Bethell Double Exposure BBC2	X	BEST TALK MRS MERTON CHRISTMAS SHOW Mark Gorton/Peti Mann/Caroline Aherne Granada Television for BBC Manchester BBC1	X
THE RICHARD DIMBLEBY AWARD ROBERT HUGHES Writer and presenter of AMERICAN VISIONS BBC2	X	THE SPECIAL AWARD CHARLES WHEELER BBC Correspondent	X
BEST NEWS COVERAGE NEWSNIGHT: BSE COVERAGE Peter Horrocks BBC2	X	BEST SPORTS/EVENTS COVERAGE BBC1 EURO 96 COVERAGE Niall Sloane/Vivien Kent BBC1	X
BEST ACTRESS OUR FRIENDS IN THE NORTH BBC2	X	BEST COMEDY PERFORMANCE DAVID JASON ONLY FOOLS AND HORSES: CHRISTMAS SPECIAL BBC1	X
THE PLATINUM DOCUMENTARY AWARD HORIZON: FERMAT'S LAST THEOREM John Lynch/Simon Singh BBC2	X	BEST CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME/BEST SCHOOLS DRAMA SHAKESPEARE SHORTS: ROMEO AND JULIET Richard Langridge/Anne Brogan/Andrew Chater BBC Schools BBC2	X
THE FOREIGN TELEVISION PROGRAMME MURDER ONE A Steven Bochco production BBC2	X	BEST SHORT ANIMATED FILM THE OLD LADY AND THE PIGEONS Bernard La Jole/Dieder Brunner/Sylvain Chomet A Ganga Production for BBC Bristol BBC2	X
BEST EDITING OF A FACTUAL PROGRAMME EDWARD ROBERTS AND EDITING TEAM THE SYSTEM BBC2	X	BEST MAKE UP/HAIR JEAN SPEAK THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL BBC1	X
THE ALAN CLARKE AWARD MICHAEL WEARING Head of Drama Serials, BBC Production	X	LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD ANNA HOWE Head of Children's Programmes, BBC Production	X
THE DENNIS POTTER AWARD PETER PLANNERY Writer of OUR FRIENDS IN THE NORTH BBC2	X		



Public appreciation of the BBC's unique range of television programmes was echoed by the professional votes of this year's BAFTA juries – in the British equivalent of the Oscars. BBC programme makers, performers and contributors won an unrivalled array of 22 awards. Congratulations to them all.



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IN BRIEF

Hickson sells PharmaChem for £28.5m

Hickson International is selling Hickson PharmaChem to Warner-Lambert for £28.5m in cash, which will be used to reduce borrowings. David Wilbraham, chief executive, said: "The sale of PharmaChem represents another significant element of our asset disposal programme aimed at restructuring the group's portfolio of businesses and strengthening our balance sheet." PharmaChem, which contract manufactures fine chemicals for the pharmaceutical and healthcare markets, incurred operating losses before exceptional of £4.8m on turnover of £16.1m in 1996.

Utility Cable shares at all-time low

Shares in Utility Cable fell 5.25p to an all-time low of 12.5p after the specialist cable layer reported an 18 per cent drop in pre-tax profits from £2.2m to £1.8m for the six months to February. The setback was attributed to "operational difficulties and exceptional losses in some completed contracts". It lost more than £1m on three contracts in Luton, Belfast and Birmingham, which it blamed on difficulties in getting labour. The Belfast contract was signed a week after the IRA ceasefire ended. The company warned that full-year profits would be lower than expected and the dividend was at risk.

Crest Packaging buys Rexam units

Crest Packaging has acquired Rexam Cartons and Print South from Rexam for £3.8m, subject to adjustment for the value of net assets. Rexam Cartons makes folding cartons for consumer goods markets. In 1996 it made a loss before interest of £900,000 on sales of £12.7m. Crest said that despite the loss, "there has been a significant improvement in the trading results of Rexam Cartons in the first quarter of 1997. This will now be underpinned by savings in the purchase of raw materials, by the ability of management to switch production to another site as required and a reduced depreciation charge." Crest is providing £350,000 for integration costs.

Gartland Whalley to float niche groupings

Gartland Whalley and Barker is to set up a new division, Crossley House Ventures, which is to create niche groupings of companies through acquisitions. Once groupings of companies have been formed they will be floated on the Alternative Investment Market. Once the companies have been floated, Crossley House Ventures will continue to seek acquisitions to accelerate the growth of the grouping until it is of sufficient size to move to a full listing.

Allied Colloids picks up chemical division

Allied Colloids has conditionally agreed to buy Index Chemicals, a division of Australian-listed Index, for around £6.7m. Index Chemicals, which has sales of approximately \$39m (£4.4m), makes anionic, nonionic and cationic polymers used primarily in mining and industrial processing including water treatment, waste treatment and paper manufacturing.

Blagden to expand with Komet cash

Blagden Industries has sold Komet to Christian Dalloz of France for £2.4m plus settlement of inter-group and third party debt of £700,000. Proceeds will be used to expand Blagden's core businesses. It said the value of Komet's net assets was £600,000 at the end of 1996, and Komet achieved pre-tax profits £600,000 last year. "The disposal of Komet is in line with Blagden's stated strategy for the protective equipment division and will make it possible for Blagden to concentrate on the core manufactured chemicals, chemical trading and packaging divisions," a spokesman said.

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Blagden (P)	187m (230m)	-5.37m (0.15m)	-8.41p (0.37p)	23p (1.26p)
Royal Dutch/Shell (Q1)	20.9m (19.2m)	1.55m (1.63m)	15.5p (15.5p)	- (-)
Utility Cable (Q)	55.1m (43.0m)	1.73m (2.23m)	0.82p (1.08p)	0.27p (-)

(P) - Profit (Q) - Interim (Q1) - First quarter
* prior figures are current cost net income
† EPS figures are for Shell Transport & Trading

Andersen may struggle to keep its act together

A consultancy spin-off has been rejected but the issue is unlikely to go away, writes Roger Trapp

The overwhelming decision by the more than 2,700 partners in the Andersen Worldwide Organisation to keep the professional services firm together brings to an end over a year of management-distracting discussions. But it is unlikely that this week's rejection – by a 93 per cent vote – of a spinning-off of the highly successful consultancy practice will bury the issue entirely.

In recent days, the Chicago-based firm has been at pains to point out that the time-consuming meetings had enabled senior people, in the words of one insider, to "become much more knowledgeable about the business and much more understanding about how they work".

Enriched positions along the lines of "bean-counters" lacking creativity while management consultants "just plough in" had been replaced by more measured views.

And although it has been suggested that any rows had been "along the boundaries and the margins", there have been widely expressed tensions over matters like the level of subsidy paid by Andersen Consulting to the main accounting and business services operation known as Arthur Andersen, and encroachments on Andersen Consulting's perceived territory by its sister division's developing consultancy operation.

As the statement issued yesterday indicated, such issues will occupy the management team that will take over in August, following the retirement of Larry Weinbach as chief executive.

Much has been made of the negotiating process has continued of the irony of a firm of business advisers seemingly unable to make up its mind over its future direction. The Andersen 21 group of senior partners charged with considering the matter even missed their original target date for drawing up a plan, with Jim Wadia, UK managing partner, attributing the slip to the com-

plexity of dealing with the first restructuring of the firm since the split into two business units in 1989.

But at least Andersen has followed the traditional management consultant's dictum that it is better to plan for the future when you are doing well rather than wait until a crisis. Both sides of the business have seen strong growth in recent years – even when rivals were struggling during the recession of the early 1990s.

The combined organisation – which includes law firms worldwide – employs more than 100,000 and is expected to net revenues of more than \$11bn (£6.8bn) in the current year.

The consultancy firm has grown faster than its Big Six rivals, moving up to second position in the UK rankings, partly due to the acquisition of the second-tier firm Binder Hamlyn.

But the spectacular growth has been in the consulting arm, which – unlike most big six management consulting firms – is more of an information technology systems provider than a general business adviser or even strategy house like McKinsey & Co or Bain.

As a partnership, it is not required to publish detailed financial information, but in March, the consulting practice, which claims that more than half of the Fortune Global 500 companies are clients, reported a 26 per cent rise in net revenues, to \$5.3bn. The growing trend for outsourcing of IT operations has been an especially important driver of this rise in fees.

The increasing popularity of outsourcing is also boosting the accounting business, though. Yesterday, the UK firm announced that the supermarket group Asda had awarded it one of the largest internal audit contracts in the UK.

Worldwide, this sort of business is worth about \$200m. To the firm and employs 1,000 professional staff.

business

Pirc's attack on Shell is raising hackles in the City. Terry Macalister reports

Boardroom policeman treads on toes

For a change, it won't be just directors who find themselves pitched against Pirc, the self-proclaimed policeman of corporate governance, at Shell's annual general meeting on 14 May. The Association of British Insurers and its members have decided to come out in support of Royal Dutch/Shell in its fight against shareholders protesting about the company's human rights record and environmental practices.

Pirc has backed a special resolution calling on the board to clean up their act. But after listening to the arguments, the AIB has decided to give public backing to the board. Many in the boardroom and in the City will be privately hoping that the AIB's stance marks a turning of the tide against politically correct shareholder activism.

"Some of what Pirc does is perfectly reasonable," said one pension fund manager. "But here they are turning from corporate governance to environmental issues and we can't go along with that."

Undaunted, Pension Investment Research Consultants (Pirc) is planning to step up its activities in a move which will create a ripple of concern in boardrooms around the country. At present it restricts itself to the country's top 350 companies but Alan MacDougall, founder and joint managing director, says he aims eventually to cover the entire stock market for its list of 33 clients.

The organisation, which has widened its attacks from executive pay to take on Shell's human rights record in Nigeria, has grown enormously since it was established by Mr MacDougall and Anne Simpson just over 10 years ago. From a desk and a telephone in Britain, it has become a private business with offices on the fringes of the City, a staff of 22, and a turnover close to £1m.

It is accused by critics of being an unrepresentative and secretive body, but Mr MacDougall insists Pirc is

completely above board and transparent. He points out that it always sends details of its reports to affected companies so that they check their accuracy and comment on them ahead of publication.

"We are not a shadowy or secretive organisation. We have 40 pension funds and eight fund managers as clients, many from the private sector," he said.

But Pirc's sometime abrasive tactics coupled with Mr MacDougall's background with the National Union of Mineworkers and Hackney Council, fuel fears in some quarters that Pirc is politically motivated.

"Rubbish," said Mr MacDougall, pointing out that all his working life has been spent in pension or investment fund management. Ms Simpson's past as an Oxfam worker also puts her out of the frame as a political activist, except among the more paranoid boardrooms.

Although Pirc's profile has been raised by punch-ups with Shell over Nigeria, its staple diet is still pushing companies to abide by the Cadbury and Greenbury corporate governance codes.

It offers individual reports on all 350 FTSE companies, providing clients with details on all forthcoming



Good cause: Anne Simpson, a Pirc founder, once worked for Oxfam

with a Greenpeace-like flair for public relations. It has nothing in its locker to match Greenpeace's direct action, but critical shareholder questioning at annual meetings often start at Pirc's door. Its penchant for

shareholder activism has made it a target for public relations. It has nothing in its locker to match Greenpeace's direct action, but critical shareholder questioning at annual meetings often start at Pirc's door. Its penchant for

You will not get us to comment about them on the record - Pirc has teeth

ing agm resolutions analysed with reference to best business practice.

Regular updates on corporate governance are provided through a research service and a monthly briefing bulletin, Pirc Intelligence. In this field, it is competing against research material put out by organisations such as the National Association of Pension Funds in the UK. Its research has been coupled

attacking high-profile corporations make it a useful story source for newspapers. And it has good in-house media advice available from its non-executive chairman, John Plender, who is a leader writer on the *Financial Times*.

The group, which mainly represents local authority and trade union pension funds, does not attack companies itself. But it trawls through

The kipper-tie maker triumphed over Maxwell

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



City deal maker: John Talbot is a perfect emblem of the Tory era

John Talbot's career mirrors the triumphs and tragedies of the British economy under the past 18 years of Tory rule. In the early 1980s Mr Talbot worked as a financial director in a Midlands factory which made kipper ties. Fashions changed and his company went into receivership.

The receivers were so impressed by his grasp of finances, however, that they offered him a job. He accepted, and after a few career moves he popped up at Arthur Andersen, heading its insolvency department just in time for the recession.

In 1991, a man, a profoundly reticent professional, found himself splashed all over the front pages as the chief winder-upper of Robert Maxwell's global business empire. He was responsible for co-ordinating a large team which had to disentangle more than 200 companies world-wide and find out where the pension money ended up.

With that and similar tasks completed, our hero now leads a corporate finance department for Arthur Andersen. So successful has he been that a recent mergers and acquisitions league table put AA 14th in the UK, ahead of other corporate finance houses such as JP Morgan. All that and he's a demon at snooker as well.

From kipper-tie maker to corporate undertaker to City deal maker in 18 years, Mr Talbot is a perfect emblem of the Tory era. Perhaps there's a film in it?

Germany's biggest management consultancy has poached the UK managing director of rivals Arthur D Little to head up a big expansion drive in Britain.

Roland Berger & Partner has appointed Tim Simpson, a youthful-looking 50-year-old, to lead the charge. He will join UK chairman Ian Hay Davidson, a former boss of Lloyd's of London.

While Berger has been growing like mad in Germany recently it has only begun to operate seriously in the UK in the past couple of years.

Mr Simpson is described to me by someone who's met him as "quite nice really - not like a management consultant at all. He

doesn't draw you lots of diagrams or things like that."

Messrs Simpson and Hay Davidson should have no trouble bonding. Mr Simpson is an optimist, while there's nothing Mr Hay Davidson prefers more than a spot of church bell ringing. They should make a lively, if noisy, team.

Sam Simons, contracts manager at Taylor Woodrow, has been a busy bee. Taylor Woodrow has just landed a £22m contract to supply all the concrete panning for 14.5km of tunnels in the new Copenhagen underground system.

Mr Simons is proud of his concrete, which has been used in the Heathrow Express Rail Link, Thames Water sewer refurbishments and London Electricity cable tunnels. The secret, Mr Simons tells me, is the granite aggregate used in the concrete. It comes from Glen Sanda on the coast of west Scotland. So what? Labour does about European integration, there will be a large chunk of Scotland nesting forever in the bosom of Copenhagen.

Oh dear. Here comes another management fad: "Business

recapitulation aims to balance four human aspects - emotional, physical, mental and spiritual - to enhance relationships, solve problems and integrate people and activities."

Heather Campbell and David Firth, specialists in human behaviour, will present a paper on business recapitulation at a Working Potential conference at Regent's College, London, on 15 May.

Ms Campbell says: "My work combines psychology, ancient wisdom, ritual, the creative arts and humour. Balancing all four human aspects will help us with the multiplicity of problems we face in today's business environment." Blimey. At this rate Sting will be running GEC.

Allied Domecq, the Beefeater to Teacher's group, has brought in Rupert Barclay from L&K Partnership to be its new strategy guru. Mr Barclay, 40, did an MA in Classics at St John's College, Cambridge, and has an MBA too.

Mr Barclay and Tony Hales, group chief executive, will work out how to put extra fizz into the booze and pubs business.

John Willcock

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Dollar	1 month	3 months
US	1.5840	9.5	26.25	1000	23.26	82.60
Canada	2.2827	6.5	170.82	13933	23.26	82.60
Germany	2.7900	70.63	207.96	1786	33.31	95.56
France	6.6922	227.21	676.94	1786	33.31	95.56
Italy	2.7643	26.42	71.94	17024	26.53	73.53
Japan	205.06	99.95	226.20	12627	54.53	57.15
Spain	143.12	1.3	3.5	35.27	12.15	14.3
Belgium	57.901	5.10	42.35	35.469	7.5	20.17
Denmark	10.821	230.10	700.60	63.403	89.79	288.47
Netherlands	3.3435	3.5	246.32	35.27	12.15	14.3
Sweden	10.821	230.10	700.60	63.403	89.79	288.47
Norway	1.503	200.20	790.670	70282	50.25	18.89
Switzerland	91.21	6.21	129.9	170.250	41.76	129.101
Australia	2.1638	93.84	274.250	14690	48.46	145.139
Malaysia	4.0709	0.5	0.0	25.067	27.30	80.85
New Zealand	2.3549	2.5	74.36	14500	22.34	65.47
South Africa	1.4	0.0	0.0	37.075	1.5	5.9
Singapore	2.3472	0.0	0.0	14.483	24.19	70.35

Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Dollar	1 month	3 months
Argentina	1.6242	0.9999	0.9999	13.651	85.3000	0.9999
Australia	1.65428	0.20933	0.20933	0.20933	0.20933	0.20933
Brazil	1.27279	1.27279	1.27279	25.3000	40.9999	0.9999
Canada	1.54056	0.61056	0.61056	26.6000	26.6000	26.6000
Egypt	5.5247	3.4049	3.4049	280.469	172.700	0.9999
Finland	6.3885	5.947	5.947	36.405	36.405	36.405
Greece	3.9509	3.9509	3.9509	50.0000	50.0000	50.0000
India	44.436	27.6900	27.6900	44.436	44.436	44.436
Kuwait	58.0918	35.7550	35.7550	44.824	22.8000	0.9999
Libya	0.4945	0.4945	0.4945	3.8730	3.8730	3.8730

Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount; subtract from spot rate
 Dollar rates quoted as isocurrencies; add to spot rate
 For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0891 123 3033.
 Calls cost 50p per minute.

Interest Rates

UK	600%	Germany	2.5%	US	8.75%	Japan	0.50%
Prime	5.00%	Discount	4.50%	Fed Funds	5.25%	Discount	2.50%
Interbank	3.10%	Canada	4.75%	Spain	5.00%	Canada	3.00%
Discount	7.5%	Netherlands	2.70%	Denmark	3.25%	Sweden	4.00%
Advances	2.70%	Discount	3.25%	Switzerland	4.00%	Switzerland	4.00%

Bond Yields

Country	5yr	10yr	15yr	20yr	25yr	30yr
UK	7.0%	7.12%	7.25%	7.41%	7.57%	7.74%
US	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%
Germany	4.76%	4.84%	4.92%	5.00%	5.08%	5.16%
France	4.76%	4.84%	4.92%	5.00%	5.08%	5.16%

Money Market Rates

Country	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
UK	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%
US	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%
Germany	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%
France	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%

Tourist Rates

Country	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
UK	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%
US	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%
Germany	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%
France	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%	5.75%

Liffe Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long Gilt	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25
Short Gilt	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25
Long Euro	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25
Short Euro	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25

Liffe FTSE 100 Index Option

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long FTSE 100	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25
Short FTSE 100	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25

Energy

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long Oil	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25
Short Oil	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25

Commodity Indices

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long Gold	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25
Short Gold	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25

Industrial Metals

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long Aluminum	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25
Short Aluminum	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25

Precious Metals

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long Gold	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25
Short Gold	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25

Agricultural

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long Wheat	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25
Short Wheat	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25

Other Softs

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long Coffee	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25
Short Coffee	110.25	110.25	110.25	110.25

Latest Unit Trust Prices

Unit Trust	Price	Unit Trust	Price	Unit Trust	Price	Unit Trust	Price
ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840	ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840	ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840	ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840
ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840	ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840	ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840	ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840
ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840	ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840	ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840	ABN AMRO Pensions Ltd	1.5840

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Yalaïetane switches to France

Racing
JOHN COBB

The racetrack commentator at Newmarket will sleep a little more easily tonight. Not only have two runners defected from the 2,000 Guineas for many years, but one of them, Yalaïetane, would have received verbal gymnastics of Olympic standard for the commentator to have mentioned him more than twice over the course of the Rowley Mile.

Yalaïetane, along with the Clive Brittain-trained Fantastic Fellow, now heads to France on Sunday week and the softer option - in every sense - of the Poule d'Essai des Poulains (French 2,000 Guineas). His absence leaves Michael Stoute, his trainer, with two runners with which to pursue a third success in the first colts' Classic tomorrow. It remains a formidable team, with the big-race talking horse, Entrepreneur, lining up alongside his stablemate, the Craven Stakes winner Desert Storm.

Stoute had consulted Yalaïetane's owner, Makoum Al Makoum, in whose colours Desert Storm also runs, before deciding on which horses would attempt to supplement his 2,000 victories with Studeed (1985) and Doyoun (1988).

Yesterday, the Sheikh's racing manager, Joe Mercer, said: "We jeopardise a horse like Yalaïetane on fast ground when he will be better with a bit more cut." The ground at Newmarket will be good, fast ground, but it will be fast ground.

"It has been a scorching day today and any watering they have done today will have been absorbed, so Yalaïetane will go to France. Ray Cochrane will ride Desert Storm on Saturday and we would like to get Frankie Dettori for Yalaïetane if he is available."

Fantastic Fellow, winner of

France's principal Guineas trial for colts, the Prix d'Essai, on his seasonal debut last month, had been left at Newmarket in case the field for the Classic cut up.

But after consultation with Prince Ahmed Sulman, mastermind of the Thoroughbred Corporation, in whose colours Fantastic Fellow runs, Brittain has opted for Longchamp. "John Reid will ride him. John has a lot of experience round there and will ride him in work on Saturday," Brittain said.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Hattara
(Newmarket 2.35)
NB: Kaiser Kache
(Newmarket 2.05)

Revoque, who lost his unbeaten record when second to Yalaïetane in the Greenham Stakes in their Classic prep, was the colt in demand with the bookmakers yesterday. The Peter Chapple-Hyam-trained colt is now 7-2 favourite, from 4-1, with Coral after sustained support.

The firm also shortened Critique Head's Pas De Repose for Sunday's 1,000 Guineas. The filly is now 4-1 joint second favourite with Godolphin's Moonlight Paradise.

The market is likely to be stirred again today when the first Godolphin runners of the season take to the track at Newmarket. The benefits of the winter sunshine of Dubai will be put to the test by Hattara, amarrana's half-brother, in the Newmarket Stakes, a Derby trial, by Tulpin in the Jockey Club Stakes and by Zahir in the finale. Those who fancy Moonlight Paradise or, in the 2,000, Shamikh should consider stepping into the ring now.

2,000 Guineas, 2-2 Revoque, 4-1 Entrepreneur, 9-2 Shamikh, 7-1 Hidden Meadow, 9-1 Tulpin, 12-1 Potence, 14-1 Zahir, 16-1 Shamikh, 18-1 Entrepreneur, 20-1 Moonlight Paradise, 25-1 Pas De Repose, 30-1 Revoque, 35-1 Zahir, 40-1 Shamikh, 45-1 Entrepreneur, 50-1 Moonlight Paradise, 55-1 Pas De Repose, 60-1 Revoque, 65-1 Zahir, 70-1 Shamikh, 75-1 Entrepreneur, 80-1 Moonlight Paradise, 85-1 Pas De Repose, 90-1 Revoque, 95-1 Zahir, 100-1 Shamikh, 105-1 Entrepreneur, 110-1 Moonlight Paradise, 115-1 Pas De Repose, 120-1 Revoque, 125-1 Zahir, 130-1 Shamikh, 135-1 Entrepreneur, 140-1 Moonlight Paradise, 145-1 Pas De Repose, 150-1 Revoque, 155-1 Zahir, 160-1 Shamikh, 165-1 Entrepreneur, 170-1 Moonlight Paradise, 175-1 Pas De Repose, 180-1 Revoque, 185-1 Zahir, 190-1 Shamikh, 195-1 Entrepreneur, 200-1 Moonlight Paradise, 205-1 Pas De Repose, 210-1 Revoque, 215-1 Zahir, 220-1 Shamikh, 225-1 Entrepreneur, 230-1 Moonlight Paradise, 235-1 Pas De Repose, 240-1 Revoque, 245-1 Zahir, 250-1 Shamikh, 255-1 Entrepreneur, 260-1 Moonlight Paradise, 265-1 Pas De Repose, 270-1 Revoque, 275-1 Zahir, 280-1 Shamikh, 285-1 Entrepreneur, 290-1 Moonlight Paradise, 295-1 Pas De Repose, 300-1 Revoque, 305-1 Zahir, 310-1 Shamikh, 315-1 Entrepreneur, 320-1 Moonlight Paradise, 325-1 Pas De Repose, 330-1 Revoque, 335-1 Zahir, 340-1 Shamikh, 345-1 Entrepreneur, 350-1 Moonlight Paradise, 355-1 Pas De Repose, 360-1 Revoque, 365-1 Zahir, 370-1 Shamikh, 375-1 Entrepreneur, 380-1 Moonlight Paradise, 385-1 Pas De Repose, 390-1 Revoque, 395-1 Zahir, 400-1 Shamikh, 405-1 Entrepreneur, 410-1 Moonlight Paradise, 415-1 Pas De Repose, 420-1 Revoque, 425-1 Zahir, 430-1 Shamikh, 435-1 Entrepreneur, 440-1 Moonlight Paradise, 445-1 Pas De Repose, 450-1 Revoque, 455-1 Zahir, 460-1 Shamikh, 465-1 Entrepreneur, 470-1 Moonlight Paradise, 475-1 Pas De Repose, 480-1 Revoque, 485-1 Zahir, 490-1 Shamikh, 495-1 Entrepreneur, 500-1 Moonlight Paradise, 505-1 Pas De Repose, 510-1 Revoque, 515-1 Zahir, 520-1 Shamikh, 525-1 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5190-1 Revoque, 5195-1 Zahir, 5200-1 Shamikh, 5205-1 Entrepreneur, 5210-1 Moonlight Paradise, 5215-1 Pas De Repose, 5220-1 Revoque, 5225-1 Zahir, 5230-1 Shamikh, 5235-1 Entrepreneur, 5240-1 Moonlight Paradise, 5245-1 Pas De Repose, 5250-1 Revoque, 5255-1 Zahir, 5260-1 Shamikh, 5265-1 Entrepreneur, 5270-1 Moonlight Paradise, 5275-1 Pas De Repose, 5280-1 Revoque, 5285-1 Zahir, 5290-1 Shamikh, 5295-1 Entrepreneur, 5300-1 Moonlight Paradise, 5305-1 Pas De Repose, 5310-1 Revoque, 53

Salisbury set for the flight path

David Llewellyn meets the England leg-spinner who is enjoying life in his new home at The Oval

The summer of '97 could well go down in cricketing annals as the year of the leg-spinner. After all, there are enough of them around. The touring Australians will have the inimitable Shane Warne, Somerset have re-engaged the engaging and mesmerising Mushtaq Ahmed, while Kent have taken on Zimbabwe's Paul Strang.

It is highly likely that all of them - and the clutch of other wrist spinners around the shires - would echo the sentiments of Surrey's own leggie, Ian Salisbury, who greets the prospect of a dry, dusty summer and its concomitant hosepipe bans with unalloyed joy. "That would be absolutely beautiful," said Salisbury, who is hoping that his move from troubled Sussex to The Oval will relaunch his England career.

"I'll be quite happy if there is a hosepipe ban. Unfortunately," he added, a shadow flitting momentarily across his face as he indicates the lush acres of his new home through the windows of the Long Room, "it's still nice and green out there."

However, as he prepares to take on the giant-killing British Universities at The Oval today, Salisbury is happy. His pre-season trip to South Africa was a success, but not because of what he achieved on the field. "I took a few wickets," he says, "but the most exciting thing I did over there was to meet Terry Jenner. It was absolutely brilliant."

Jenner, a leg-spinner who won nine Australian caps during the 70s, is now the leg-spinners guru of the 90s, his services have been used in New Zealand and South Africa, while he also works at the Australian Cricket Academy near Adelaide. "He is Shane Warne's coach," Salisbury explains. "His personal mentor. He is a legend. And Terry was with us for a whole day while we were in South Africa." There is no doubt how Salisbury regards Jenner. "He was just unbelievable. He gave me a few tips, two or three pointers for me to work on. He is just the best person I could have chatted to. I'd love to have spoken to him when I was 18."

Nine years on, Salisbury is determined to prove that the meeting has not come too late. The move north and a winter off has left him, he says, with an enthusiasm for, and his desire to play the game "sky high". Surrey have made him welcome. "I feel a part of everything and that's before I've even played a game."

If his enthusiasm is at all infectious then the uptake of what was a dying art could reach serious proportions this summer. He is animated when talking of leg-spinning and its perpetrators. "Terry Jenner has a passion for leg-spinning," explains Salisbury, who, like Jenner, has just nine Tests to his

name. "And if you haven't got that passion then there is no point. It is different from everything else. I love bowling leg-spin. I love it."

"Terry Alderman's swing bowling was almost an art form and fast bowlers are strong and clever, but there is a bulliness about them. A slow bowler is like an elegant baller. Leg-spinning has mystique and romance. Everybody wants to know how and why, but no one really knows."

"I think the public have got a little bit bored with fast bowling. Just watching them running in and bouncing a batsman, maybe getting a catch, maybe hitting them on the head is all very well, but it is nothing compared to the excitement that has been generated by Warnemania. "Warne has taken leg-spin to another level. As a performer and as an artist and entertainer he is in another league. The more people take an interest in Warne and the more they find out about him, then the more they will appreciate what's going on out there in the middle, and that's where the fun'll start. Warne is a superstar. He is the best there's ever been. I hope he bowls well."

The torrent of praise is dammed for a second as Salisbury filters his words through a sluice gate of moderation. He resumes with the qualification: "I don't want him to get too



Ian Salisbury: "I'll be quite happy if there is a hosepipe ban. Unfortunately it is still nice and green out there"

Photograph: Robert Hallam

many England wickets. But he is the catalyst. You ask any other leg-spinner in the world. You can compare him with anyone from the past and he is the best. He is up there."

Which is where Salisbury wants to be. His last Test ap-

pearance, at The Oval against Pakistan last summer, was hardly what might be deemed a howling success. His 29 overs went for 116 runs and all he picked up was a solitary wicket, Mushtaq, on the other hand, claimed eight victims in a match

the tourists won by nine wickets. But although Salisbury acknowledges that it was a poor show still he feels he can draw some encouragement to buoy him as he attempts to resurrect his England career during The Ashes series this summer. "In

that Test, once I changed ends, shortly before the finish, the ball started to spin a lot. In fact every time I've played at The Oval it's turned."

He is nothing if not industrious. Salisbury is always looking to fine-tune here and tweak

there. The latest thing is flight. "Flight is everything," he explains. "It is probably the single most important thing for a leg-spinner. Flight is what does top batsmen and that is what I will be working on." Stand by for take-off.

Penalty costs Romero first-round lead

Golf

The English pair, Carl Mason and Jonathan Lomas, had the unenviable task of reporting Eduardo Romero for a rules infringement that cost the Argentinean veteran a share of the lead after the opening round of the Italian Open.

Romero accidentally grounded his club while sitting up his line on

the 14th green of the Gardafoglio course in Brescia, breaking a European Tour regulation that cost him a two-shot forfeit. And although he did not know he had committed the infraction, he accepted the English professionals' word and took his penalty.

The tournament director, David Garland, said: "On the 14th green Eduardo walked forward on his line and played a couple of prac-

tice swings 10 feet from the cup. His partner noticed he grounded his club. Jon Lomas, watching through his legs as he touched his line, although he cannot remember doing so. We had no other proof because the television cameras did not show it, but Eduardo accepted the penalty."

Romero said: "I don't know what happened because I didn't see anything, feel anything. Carl and

Jonathan say they both saw it so I accept that. Now I have the determination to win, so no problem. Now I will shoot 66 in the second round."

That left Romero in an eight-way tie for third place, two shots off the lead held by Retief Goosen of South Africa, whose six-under-par 66 left him one ahead of Ian Woosnam. The Welshman's return to a wooden driver worked the trick as he produced a five-birdie 67.

Goosen, who had his maiden European victory in last year's Slaley Hall Challenge, holed a huge 50-footer on the last following an eagle and four birdies as he set the record at Gardafoglio, despite suffering from a bout of influenza.

"I felt terrible and I used up a whole toilet roll wiping my nose on the way round," Goosen said. "I guess I felt so ill I just got on with it and I holed some putts."

Smith in great touch

Hockey

BILL COLWILL
United States
England

Jane Smith, a 48th-minute substitute, dived full length with splendid anticipation to score the goal in the 63rd minute which gave the young England side a hard-fought victory against the Americans.

England exploited their youth policy in this opening game in the Five Nations tournament in Vancouver with all six uncapped players starting with the previously uncapped Lisa Copeland giving a tenacious performance.

Opening their tough programme of four matches in four

days under an overcast evening sky and floodlights, England took time to settle and might have conceded an early goal. But, with goalkeeper Hilary Rose in form, they held the Americans at bay.

While England's counter-attacks came mainly down the right, the Americans held out until seven minutes from the end when Smith struck for the winner. Earlier Canada, with a goal from Aishlinn Grimes two minutes after the interval, beat Ireland 1-0.

Clubs in call for lie detector test

Australian rules

To help decide whether players are dinkum or deceitful, Essendon and Collingwood have called for the use of lie detectors in disciplinary hearings when a case depends on one player's word against another's.

The AFL clubs supported the introduction of the polygraph after a hearing cleared the Essendon defender Michael Prior of racially abusing Collingwood's Robert Alcock, an Aboriginal player. The Essendon manager, Danny Corcoran, said he had considered giving Prior a polygraph test to prove his player's innocence while the Collingwood chief executive, John May, said his club would have been happy for Alcock to take a lie detector test.

Size poses problem

Table tennis

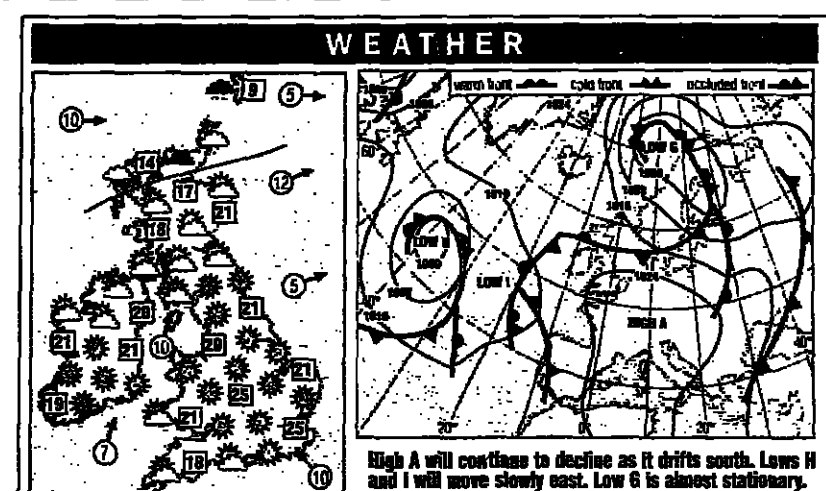
The World Table Tennis Championships have apparently grown too large, prompting strings of complaints from players and coaches about organisational problems.

The two-week event, which ends in Manchester on Monday now has 6,000 matches, 175 hours play, 3,000 tons of equipment, and 90 practice or competition tables. The championships have grown to 116 countries this year, 20 more than two years ago in China.

The World Championships are too long for the players, too unattractive and financially risky for the organisers," said Jean-Michel Saive, the former world No 1 from Belgium, who is president of the professional players association, the CTTT.

The former world mixed doubles champion, Claude Bergeret of France, who heads the Athletics Commission of the ITTF - the world governing body of the sport - said poor scheduling and a lack of communication has made it difficult for players and coaches.

The United States team leader, Bob Fox, voiced complaints that have also come from France, England and Sweden. Fox said: "We sometimes have had no idea where or when we would be playing the next day. One morning we came in at nine and the players warmed up and then found they were not on until one o'clock. "They could have been sleeping. This sort of thing completely disrupts their routine. When the team leader of Sweden says he doesn't know who they are playing either, there is a huge problem."



Forecast for today
More cloudy weather in store for northern Scotland, the Northern and Western Isles; with hill fog and some rain, but mostly light winds. The rest of Scotland should stay dry with hazy sunshine and light winds. Northern Ireland will be dry with hazy sunshine and a light southerly breeze. England and Wales will have lots of sunshine, and it will be very warm. However, the coasts will have cooling sea breezes.

outlook for the next few days
The weather will turn cooler and very showery during Saturday, but there will still be some warm sunshine in southern and eastern England. Sunday should be cloudy with showery rain, some showers will be heavy and thundery. However, northern Scotland should become dry with some sunshine. The early parts of next week should stay cool and unsettled. There will be some sunshine, but with a lot of cloud and showers.

British Isles weather
yesterday, today (GMT) or cloudy, clear, rain, fog, haze, ice, mist, rain, snow, sun, wind, sea, waves, sun, moon, clouds, etc.

Area	Temp	Wind	Sea	Waves	Sun	Moon	Clouds
Aberdeen	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Edinburgh	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Glasgow	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
London	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Manchester	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Newcastle	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Sheffield	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Southampton	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Wolverhampton	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

World weather
yesterday's high or low temp

Area	Temp	Wind	Sea	Waves	Sun	Moon	Clouds
Aberdeen	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Edinburgh	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Glasgow	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
London	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Manchester	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Newcastle	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Sheffield	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Southampton	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Wolverhampton	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

sun and moon

Area	Sun	Moon
Aberdeen	05:10	00:05
Edinburgh	05:10	00:05
Glasgow	05:10	00:05
London	05:10	00:05
Manchester	05:10	00:05
Newcastle	05:10	00:05
Sheffield	05:10	00:05
Southampton	05:10	00:05
Wolverhampton	05:10	00:05

Lighting-up times

Area	Lighting-up
Aberdeen	20:17
Edinburgh	20:17
Glasgow	20:17
London	20:17
Manchester	20:17
Newcastle	20:17
Sheffield	20:17
Southampton	20:17
Wolverhampton	20:17

high tides

Area	High Tides
Aberdeen	05:28, 17:48
Edinburgh	05:28, 17:48
Glasgow	05:28, 17:48
London	05:28, 17:48
Manchester	05:28, 17:48
Newcastle	05:28, 17:48
Sheffield	05:28, 17:48
Southampton	05:28, 17:48
Wolverhampton	05:28, 17:48

air quality

Area	Air Quality
Aberdeen	Good
Edinburgh	Good
Glasgow	Good
London	Good
Manchester	Good
Newcastle	Good
Sheffield	Good
Southampton	Good
Wolverhampton	Good

Yesterday's Readings

Area	Readings
Aberdeen	Good
Edinburgh	Good
Glasgow	Good
London	Good
Manchester	Good
Newcastle	Good
Sheffield	Good
Southampton	Good
Wolverhampton	Good

Out and about with AA Roadwatch

Area	Roadwatch
Aberdeen	Good
Edinburgh	Good
Glasgow	Good
London	Good
Manchester	Good
Newcastle	Good
Sheffield	Good
Southampton	Good
Wolverhampton	Good

Baseball

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Detroit 4 Milwaukee 4; Boston 11 Kansas City 12; Cleveland 12 Chicago 10; New York Yankees 3 Seattle 2; Texas 6 Chicago White Sox 2; St Louis 6 Philadelphia 1; Kansas City 2 Baltimore 12; Minnesota 3.

NATIONAL LEAGUE: Los Angeles 7 Philadelphia 5; San Francisco 6 Pittsburgh 12; Atlanta 12 Cincinnati 3; Montreal 6 Houston 6; New York Mets 6 San Diego 2; St Louis 6 Florida 2; Colorado 12 Chicago Cubs 1.

Basketball

NBA: Eastern Conference: Chicago 96 Washington 93; Phoenix 90 New York Knicks 89; Western Conference: Portland 90 Los Angeles 88; Seattle 90 Golden State 88; Utah 90 Sacramento 88; Minnesota 90 Dallas 88; Houston 90 San Antonio 88; New Orleans 90 Memphis 88; Orlando 90 Miami 88; Philadelphia 90 Cleveland 88; Detroit 90 Indiana 88; Charlotte 90 Atlanta 88; Washington 90 Boston 88; New Jersey 90 Toronto 88; Vancouver 90 Los Angeles 88; Phoenix 90 San Antonio 88; Dallas 90 Houston 88; Minnesota 90 Portland 88; Seattle 90 Utah 88; Sacramento 90 Memphis 88; Orlando 90 Miami 88; Philadelphia 90 Cleveland 88; Detroit 90 Indiana 88; Charlotte 90 Atlanta 88; Washington 90 Boston 88; New Jersey 90 Toronto 88; Vancouver 90 Los Angeles 88; Phoenix 90 San Antonio 88; Dallas 90 Houston 88; Minnesota 90 Portland 88; Seattle 90 Utah 88; Sacramento 90 Memphis 88; Orlando 90 Miami 88; Philadelphia 90 Cleveland 88; Detroit 90 Indiana 88; Charlotte 90 Atlanta 88; Washington 90 Boston 88; New Jersey 90 Toronto 88; 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Orlando 90 Miami 88

In bullish mood

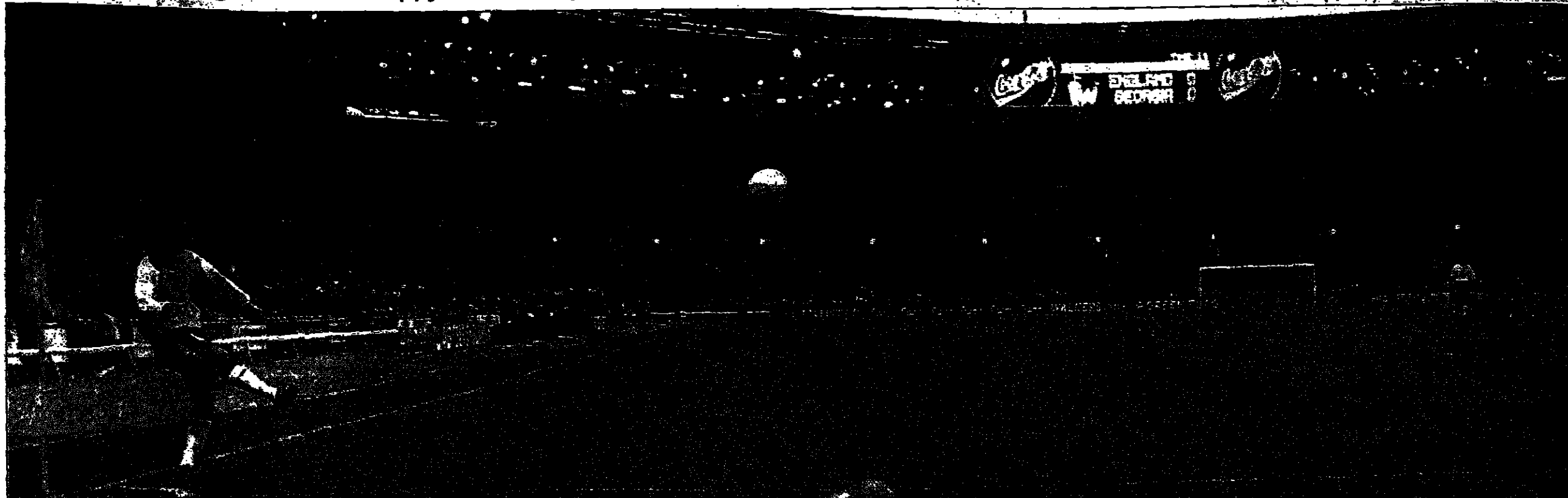
Bradford's Steve McNamara talks to
Dave Hadfield, page 30

sport

Spinning a yarn

Ian Salisbury tells David Llewellyn about
his new life at The Oval, page 31

WORLD CUP: England coach happy with victory in a match that 'needed to be won' and ascribes second-half slump to 'injury'



David Beckham takes a corner for England against Georgia at Wembley on Wednesday night. His contribution was sound in a midfield that for periods struggled to contain the visitors' advances

Photograph: David Ashdown

Hoddle's rhetoric hides shortcomings

GLENN MOORE

Football Correspondent

Listening to Glenn Hoddle in the aftermath of Wednesday night's 2-0 World Cup qualifying win over Georgia made one wonder whether Peter Mandelson had been seconded to the Football Association's PR department.

The England coach gave a performance which Mandelson, New Labour's notorious spin doctor, would have been proud of. The bright young leader was constantly upbeat as he talked at length while saying little of note. Self-contradictions, inconvenient facts and unwelcome questions were brushed aside. Like his team it was effective, but hard to warm to.

One questioner asked: "Apart from the goal did you feel there was a lack of invention?"

Hoddle replied: "Well, the goal was a superb goal. It was well created. There was lots of invention in that. It was a cutting-edge goal. Those are the sorts of things you put together and if they don't go in the back of the net people forget about it. That has come off for us on the night."

This specifically does not answer the question. Which is unfortunate because England's lack of flair in midfield was a problem. Although they had plenty of attempts on goal many of them were pot-shots from the edge of the box or from the second half after a cross into Alan Shearer and Teddy Sheringham.

The first goal was beautifully constructed and finished but similar chances were rare. Moreover, at times in the first half, and for 20 minutes at the beginning of the second, England's workman-like midfield could not stop Georgia from running through them at will.

Hoddle admitted he was "disappointed" by the second-half spell but explained: "That was partly due to Paul Ince. He had an injury at half-time and he was not quite functioning. He made some great runs in the first half and nearly ended up scoring a couple of goals. He makes things happen when he gets in the box. In the second half he was not at full throttle and couldn't do it. We ended up taking him off."

Hoddle did not take Ince off until 12 minutes from the end. Why not take him off earlier if his injury was affecting the team's potency? "He was handling it OK," Hoddle said. "I took him off after he took another knock on the same area."

One reply negates the other. If he was "handling it" Ince's injury can hardly be used as an excuse for England's loss of control. Maybe there is more to it than that, like the lack of a midfield passer, such as Jamie Redknapp.

The inclusion of Rob Lee, rather than Redknapp or a flair player such as Steve McNamara, was Hoddle's said, because "with Teddy Sheringham dropping off you can isolate Alan Shearer. Rob loves getting forward from midfield. Macra does it with the ball; Rob does it with and without. You need that with Alan being marked tightly."

So, McNamara cannot be played alongside Shearer and Sheringham. "I wouldn't say that," said Hoddle, who just had Lee justified selection. Like David Beckham and Graeme Le Saux he was prominent supporting the attack and some valuable defensive work covering for others underlined the strength of England's team spirit.

"The match needed to be won and we have done that," Hoddle said. Agreed. World Cup qualifiers are about points first and performances second. Hoddle has also been hampered by having to do almost all his team-building in competitive games. This has made it harder to instill his ideas. Hence Hoddle's pleasure in working with players like Sheringham.

Teddy is one of those players who remembers things on the training ground and does them when it is needed in games. In the last 10-15 minutes, when fatigue set in, Sol Campbell did not. He needs to concentrate in the latter stages."

As Campbell had a good game, within his limitations, and was the official man of the match such criticism could be interpreted as a way of preventing him getting carried away. If so it is a rare example of Hoddle using the press to get a point across. Usually he is far more circumspect, and is acutely aware of how comments can be

taken out of context. He also knows results will decide his destiny, not press conferences or playing performances.

Another win, in Katowice, will effectively secure England a place in the top two of Group Two. That would ensure that, at worst, they would have the chance to play-off for a place in next year's finals. Assuming they beat Moldova at home in September they may then qualify as the best-placed runner-up – at present they look to be on a par with Belgium and Yugoslavia.

A draw in Poland would probably be enough to secure second place but defeat could mean them needing at least a point in Rome in October. Not for the first time England's fate rests on the Poles.

GROUP TWO	P	A	R	T
England	15	1	1	1
Belgium	9	2	1	1
Yugoslavia	9	2	1	1
Moldova	3	3	1	1
Poland	3	3	1	1

ENGLAND UNDER HOODLE	P	A	R	T
3 September 1996: Moldova 0-3 (Shearer, Shearer, Shearer)	1	1	1	1
6 October 1996: England 2-0 (Shearer, Shearer)	1	1	1	1
12 February 1997: England 2-1 (Shearer, Shearer)	1	1	1	1
9 November 1996: England 2-0 (Shearer, Shearer)	1	1	1	1
29 March 1997: England 2-0 (Shearer, Shearer)	1	1	1	1
30 April 1997: England 2-0 (Shearer, Shearer)	1	1	1	1

Ince angered by snubs

Paul Ince yesterday hit back at suggestions that a number of leading Premiership clubs have changed their minds about signing him should he decide to leave his Italian club Internazionale this summer.

"You need a player like me if you are going to win League championships," Ince said after England's 2-0 World Cup win over Georgia. "I get livid when I hear or read that I've been snubbed by the likes of Arsenal, Newcastle, Liverpool."

Peter Hill-Wood [the Arsenal chairman] is saying that I'm 29 and past my sell-by date. Well, that's just crap. At 29 I'm reaching my peak and I'm playing the best football of my career. I don't like it when I'm getting snubbed, as if to say I'm not a good player all of a sudden. I just stick my fingers up to the people saying that."

But for Robert Coar [the Blackburn chairman] to come out and say the same sort of thing is the last straw. Let's be serious. You can tell him that he'd be lucky if I came to Blackburn, let alone them snub me. That's my message to him."

"I won Premiership titles with Manchester United. Liverpool need to do that and it's the same with Arsenal. They need a player like me to achieve that."

"I'm fed up with all these snubs but Everton are a big club and looking to get better. They have had a few problems but the potential and money is there. If they were interested I'd talk to them."

"People keep saying that if I came back that it would have to be to a London club. That's not necessarily true. The wife's mother lives in London but, if and when I come back, it doesn't matter where I go."

Ince added: "There is a lot of guessing going on about what sort of fee would be involved but people don't know what the price would be if I decide to come back. People think they are going to have to pay £7m – but if it's only £3.5m then they

might change their mind. I haven't decided what I am going to do. It's possible I might stay another year and anything in that direction will not happen until after the Uefa Cup final."

Ince: 'Let's be serious'

Robson a loser over keepers

SIMON TURNBULL

Middlesbrough's season is threatening to lurch from the sublime to the ridiculous. Following his latest defeat, another failed appeal to the Premier League, Boro's manager, Bryan Robson, is facing the possibility of using Neil Cox, a former England Under-21 right-back, as an emergency goalkeeper against Aston Villa at the Riverside Stadium tomorrow.

Robson's four goalkeepers are all on the injured list – Mark Schwarzer has a calf problem. Ben Roberts has a swollen arm, Gary Walsh is recovering from a

knee operation and Alan Miller has a suspected broken hand – and he was yesterday refused permission to borrow a goalkeeper to help his relegation-threatened side through four League games in eight days.

A Premier League spokesman said last night: "The request has been turned down. The position is perfectly clear. You can't sign players after the deadline and expect to play them in matches affecting the championship or relegation."

Robson said: "If you've got four goalkeepers out injured surely there's got to be a dispensation. As it stands, we'll just have to wrap Ben Roberts in

cotton wool. The player we've always said would go in goal in an emergency is Neil Cox."

Chelsea have, as expected, beaten off interest from Italy and Spain to sign the Uruguayan midfielder Gustavo Poyet. The 29-year-old international will go to Stamford Bridge on 30 June on a free transfer, under the Bosman ruling, when his contract ends with Spain's Real Zaragoza.

Ian Wright is in trouble with the Football Association again. The Arsenal striker has been summoned to Lancaster Gate as a result of comments he allegedly made to the referee, Mike Riley, at the end of Arsenal's 1-1 draw with Blackburn.

Jim Smith, Derby County manager, has made a £3.5m offer to Monaco for the French international Emmanuel Petit, who can play left-back, centre-back or in midfield.

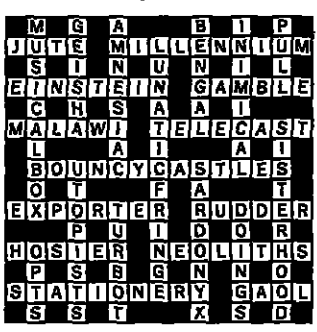
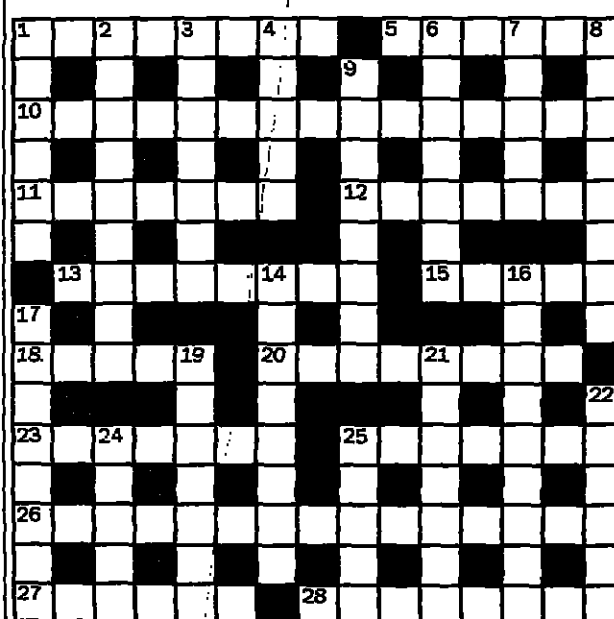
West Bromwich's chairman Tony Hale, may call on the club's former manager, Alan Buckley, to help to resolve a contract dispute with the striker Paul Peschisolidi. The Canadian asked for a transfer this week claiming that Albion had broken promises made when Buckley signed him for £600,000 last summer. Buckley is suing Hale after being sacked by Albion in January and failing to receive compensation.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3288, Friday 2 May

By Maas

Thursday's solution



- ACROSS**
- Royal service notable for the Queen's absence? (8)
 - Houses requiring officers for sale (4,2)
 - Variegated tinsel enhancements, about right for decorations (7,8)
 - Head's harbouring religious belief? (7)
 - This scot's a surgeon (7)
 - Cut left card on carpet (8)
 - Author put off mostly, absorbing none (5)
 - Iron mill (5)
 - Crocks unearthed from grasses round lake (8)
 - Waits, lavishes without measure (7)

- DOWN**
- Business agent's particular (6)
 - Waste time on article in 'exclusive' (9)
 - Run, before a boundary (7)
 - Bundle from Spain in swindle (5)
 - New released record's first to be stocked (7)
 - Part of tackle, rod, cast over river (5)

- Charlie, rising, flings custard-pies? (8)
- Girl's full of spirit – quite a talker (8)
- Checked for faulty retreats (8)
- Favoured fish with strong skin (9)
- A spirit before joint's set up? (8)
- Barney, roped in by bridge players, makes set (7)
- Miss set, badly, with ball lobbed up and out (3,4)
- Those who get going audibly in bars (6)
- One to forge a thousand in rolled-up sheets? (5)
- Freezer for resident (5)

'Lazy' Doherty gets his act together

Snooker

GUY HODGSON
reports from Sheffield

It has been a consistent answer whenever players have been asked who will win this year's Embassy World Championship at the Crucible. Stephen Hendry is mentioned, of course – you could hardly ignore him – but Ken Doherty is picked out as the man playing the best snooker.

"Ken looks as fresh as paint," John Parrott, the 1991 champion, said. "He's an exceptional match player who is not worried about Stephen or anyone else which is the right way to be. I expect him to get to the final."

Doherty, the seventh seed from the Republic of Ireland, has to win the semi-final first and yesterday that was not a foregone conclusion by any means. At the end of the first session he and Canada's Alain Robidoux were level at 4-4 and a prolonged contest seemed to be unfolding.

Nevertheless, to be in the semi-final is an accomplishment for Doherty who was routed 6-1 by Steve Davis at the Benson and Hedges and Irish Masters and irritated his manager, Ian Doyle, so much last month he described him as "lazy".

Doyle has Hendry as one of his players and the six-times world champion would make Hercules seem idle, but the portents for Sheffield were not promising. Davis was sorted out with a 13-3 win in the second round, while even the manager has been placated by his charge's sudden enthusiasm for work.

"I didn't know what 7.30 in the morning was," said Doherty, who spent four weeks before the World Championships practising seven hours a day with Ronnie O'Sullivan in Ilford. "Ian did have a point."

"He's a great manager and a great friend and I suppose I'm a bit of a lazy bastard at times. I have tried to change over the last few weeks and it's certainly paid off. I thought I was practising hard before but I was doing it a different way and maybe not so much."

Yesterday Doherty's start belied the "practice makes perfect" philosophy. His opening shot was an attempt to rest the white against the pack but he missed the speed of the table and his first action of the match was to give away four points for a foul.

Like Doherty, Robidoux, the 14th seed, is playing in his first World Championship semi-final and he looked anything but fazed by the occasion. Introduced as the "Montreal Magician" by Alan Hughes, the master of ceremonies, he did not exactly cast a spell but he did have the upper hand for much of the session leading 2-1, 3-2 and 4-3 before the Irishman levelled with a break of 75.

What the score is between Darren Morgan and "Prince" Naseem Hamed is debatable but what had begun as the snooker player asking for the boxer to be removed from the press seats at the Crucible during his quarter-final with Hendry because he found Naseem's presence "intimidating" flowered into a full-scale fuss yesterday.

Hamed, a close friend of

Hendry, was scathing about the world No 9, saying the Welshman had made a "silly, stupid excuse – a kid, childish remark".

"I'm embarrassed for the boy," Hamed said. "If he calls himself a world-class player how can he turn round and say a two-times world champion in the front row spooked him?"

Morgan fought back on Radio 5 Live. "He's talking through his hat really, but who am I to say that – he's a world champion," he said. "But it was a bit of a stupid statement. It just intimidated me, he's got an intimidating face. There's a press box there and he's not there."

Morgan said he enjoyed watching Hamed box but could not resist adding: "Everybody would like to see him smacked out – and I am probably no different."

Frank Warren, the promoter, also weighed in by offering Morgan a ringside seat for tomorrow's dual world featherweight title fight against Billy Hardy at the Nymex Centre in Manchester. "We have invited Darren Morgan to take a front row seat at the fight, to see if he can intimidate Naz on behalf of Billy. I'm sure he'd love to do that."

Morgan has declined and was understandably upset to hear himself described as "childish" and "immature" by the fighter. What he had forgotten is the first law of boxing: nothing sells tickets like a row. Alan Chamberlain, 54, of Wigan, will referee the World Championship final for the first time on Sunday and Monday.

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